THE Mennonite Quarterly Review

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EDITORIAL

The first article of this issue is a history of a local Mennonite congregation in Canada, the First Mennonite Church of Kitchener, Ontario. This article is more than a detailed and exhaustive account of one local congregation, even though its value in this respect is great. The subject of this sketch is the oldest and most influential congregation of the largest settlement of Mennonites in Canada, and for that reason its history has particular significance for the whole of Canadian Mennonitism. J. B. Cressman, the author, himself a life-long member of this congregation and scion of one of the oldest Mennonite families of Canada, is particularly well-qualified to tell the story of this group, not only as a chronicle of events and personages, but also as an interpretation of the life and spirit of this section of the larger Mennonite movement. The article will be concluded in the next issue.

The local Christian community is the ultimate and crucial arena of Christian living. If Christian ideals are to be realized anywhere they must be sincerely and effectively lived in the face-to-face intimate contacts of group life in the community. Here not only are such religious activities as worship shared, but also social and economic needs are satisfied. It is futile to expect the expression of Christian principles in the larger arenas of life if they cannot be lived in the local community. This applies to the principle of mutual aid among Christians. The test of the mutual aid principle is how it works out in the local community. For this reason the account of "Mutual Aid Activities in a Single Mennonite Community," which appears as the second article in this issue of the Review, is a necessary and vital part of the entire discussion of Mutual Aid Among Mennonites as it is being presented in the Review by Winfield Fretz. We regret that due to the need for publishing the papers on "Applied Nonresistance" which appeared in the last issue of the Review a break in the appearance of the two parts of Mr. Fretz's valuable study was necessary, the first part having appeared in the January number. The second part, which appears in this issue, describes the various expressions of mutual aid which are to be found in the Mennonite community around Mountain Lake, Minnesota. This study suggests the value of similar studies of a larger number of communities, with a view to discovering the extent and value of the various forms of mutual aid through the entire Mennonite church. We hope that Mr. Fretz will continue his study further with a view to a comprehensive description and evaluation of mutual aid in the Mennonite Church as a whole, including its various branches and settlements in all the countries where Mennonites may be found.

We welcome the brief note by John Horsch on "Menno Simons' True Position on 'Avoidance.'" It should clarify and fix our understanding of Menno's position in the light of incontrovertible data from the writings of Menno himself. It is clear that Menno has been misunderstood even by some of his friends and followers who have sought to interpret his position, and that consequently he has been somewhat maligned. John Horsch, who is known as an authority on Menno, should be the best man to conclude the discussion of this question on which historians have disagreed to some extent hitherto.

THE
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VOLUME XIII NUMBER 3

HISTORY OF THE FIRST MENNONITE CHURCH OF KITCHENER, ONTARIO

J. Boyd Cressman

I. *The Early Period* 1800-1859

In the spring of 1800, Joseph Schoerg and Samuel Betzner, the founders of the Mennonite settlement in Waterloo County, arrived on the banks of the Grand River, together with their families. Leaving Franklin County, Pennsylvania, in the fall of 1799 and wintering in the Niagara Peninsula, they had followed the Mohawk trail to Brant's ford in the spring of 1800, and thence taken the trail north to what is now Waterloo County. They were not the first white men to see this county. In addition to fur-traders, two Englishmen, Ward and Smith, had been engaged by the government to slash a road through the forest from Dundas north. Ezra Eby records that these men moved into the district with their families in the spring of 1800. If this be true, Sherk and Betzner must share with them the honor of being the first settlers. But since the subsequent history says nothing of these Englishmen, it was really Sherk and Betzner who established the settlement. Through them other Mennonites were rapidly attracted to these new lands.

During 1801 twelve families arrived from Pennsylvania. All of these settled near what are now Preston, Doon and Blair. For a complete list see Ezra Eby's *History of Waterloo Township*. Among them we may note Jacob Bechtel who was "a respected teacher in the Mennonite community" and became "one of the oldest and best beloved inhabitants of Waterloo."[1] The next year a group of at least fifteen families arrived. Most of them settled near Freeport and Preston. Among them we may note Samuel Bricker, of whom we shall soon have more to relate, and Joseph Bechtel. According to Ezra Eby the latter was ordained in 1804 as the first Mennonite preacher in this community. Thus in the fall of 1802 there were about thirty families in the new settlement on the Grand River.

The lot of these families was not an easy one. It took one party a week to travel from Dundas to Waterloo. On our modern highways this is a mere forty-five minute run in a motorcar. In 1801 the potato peelings had to be saved to plant the following spring. Covered by heavy forest, the land had to be cleared with nothing better than axes. In the literal sense the settlers were not pioneers (diggers); they were hewers. Real skill was theirs. An old resident says that the early settlers were able to fell trees so that a considerable number would fall on one pile for burning. Difficult as was their task, courage and faith triumphed over all obstacles.

Why had these people left their Pennsylvania homes? Certainly the desire for new and cheap land was a strong motive, as it has always been in the founding of new settlements. But material gain was only one motive. The second and stronger one was religious freedom, which has always been the dominant reason for Mennonite migrations. Probably the best statement is that by David Sherk, son of Joseph Schoerg, in an open letter in the HERALD OF TRUTH for April, 1866. Born in 1801, the year after his parents came here from Pennsylvania, his opinion may be accepted as authentic. In an open letter to German Mennonites he answers ten questions (of which more later) which they had asked of Elias Eby in an exchange of correspondence. Speaking of the migration to Canada, David Sherk says, "But those living under the English government enjoying unrestricted freedom of conscience, others became favorably inclined toward the government, and this in connection with

1. From his obituary notice in the *Canada Museum* for June 28, 1938.

other causes induced some of them to emigrate in the year 1799 and 1800 to Canada into an entire wilderness." Here is a clear statement of the religious cause, a faith which subsequent history has fully justified. The "other causes" we may accept as being economic, the urge for new land.

Although these new settlers had come to Canada to be under the British flag, their new homesteads were not crown lands. Instead they were bought from a certain Richard Beasley, Esquire, a prominent citizen of Upper Canada, who was elected in 1808 to the Legislative Assembly and appointed a colonel of militia in 1809. He lived at Niagara on the Lake. Since his transactions with the Mennonites are so important it will be well to state briefly how he came into possession of this land. New documents have been published[2] which make it possible to portray clearly the events leading up to and surrounding this purchase. After a number of years of agitation chiefly by Chief Joseph Brant, the Six Nations Indians, who had been settled on lands in the Grand River Basin as wards of the government, were granted the power of selling or leasing portions of their lands subject to the approval and complete control of three trustees appointed by the executive council of Upper Canada. Early in 1798, 352,710 acres of the Indian lands, divided into six blocks, were released for sale. On May 10, 1798, a mortgage was executed for Block No. 2, said to contain 94,012 acres, by Richard Beasley, James Wilson and John Baptiste Rousseau, to secure payment of 8,887 pounds, the whole of the purchase money. Beasley subsequently bought out the other two men. How he contrived such a purchase without paying any cash at all is somewhat of a mystery. Nor did he pay it rapidly. In June, 1803, only 600 pounds had been paid by him to the Indian trustees. However he had paid additional sums, contrary to the wishes of the government, to the Indians themselves. When the trustees wanted to take legal steps against Beasley, the Indian chiefs objected, as they did not wish to have Mr. Beasley "distressed wantonly" because "he has used every endeavour to pay us," and "The sums he has already paid are too great for an individual to lose, and too great for us to gain from that unfortunate individual." These protests seem to have gained a stay to legal proceedings.

2. See "The Reserve of the Six Nations on the Grand River and the Mennonite Purchase of Block No. 2" by E. A. Cruickshank in the 1927 *Report of the Waterloo County Historical Society.*

Spurred on to new efforts by the respite he had been granted, Beasley, who seems to have been negotiating with the Mennonites for some time previously, concluded an agreement with them in the fall of 1803. On November 28, an agreement was signed by Richard Beasley as owner of the land on the one hand, and "Daniel Erb, late of the County of Lancaster in the State of Pennsylvania, yeoman, and Samuel Bricker of the County of Haldimand in the Home District of the Province aforesaid, yeoman, of the other part." The amount of land was 60,000 acres of the whole tract of 94,012 and comprising Block 2 of the Indian lands. The purchase price was 10,000 pounds, province of Upper Canada currency. It must be borne in mind that this document was an agreement but not a deed. By it the transaction was to be concluded on June 1, 1804. However it was not until 1805 that the deed was executed. What happened was as follows. From the official report of the Executive Council for Upper Canada for 1804, we know that on May 18 Daniel Erb appeared before the council to complete the agreement. On behalf of himself and the other purchasers, Mr. Erb agreed to pay at once the sum of 5,000 pounds and the remaining 5,000 on May 15, 1805, with interest at 6 per cent. It was agreed that only on the payment of the second instalment should the Indian Trustees, who would apply the sum to clearing off the mortgage on the land, deed it over as being free of all encumbrances. In a letter written a few days later by Colonel Clause, one of the Indian trustees, to Chief Justice Allcock, who presided at this meeting of the Council, he stated that only 4,692 pounds was paid, but that he took a bond for 10,795 pounds to be paid on the 23rd of May, 1805. The whole business took three days to conclude. Colonel Clause adds, "They appeared to be perfectly satisfied with all that was done." It is a matter of interest to us that the business was concluded with such material satisfaction. This first payment, it is well to note, was paid in hard cash. From the records of the Registry Office in Kitchener, we know that the final payment must have been made on or about the agreed date, for the deed, giving outright title to the tract of 60,000 acres, usually known as the German Company Tract, was executed on June 29, 1805. It was signed by Daniel and Jacob Erb on behalf of the company.

Before going on to compare the information gleaned from these documents with Ezra Eby's account, a few words must be said a-

bout Richard Beasley, Esquire. From the scrutiny of the foregoing documents it seems clear that there is not a shred of evidence that he at any time acted dishonestly. He was an energetic and able man with many interests. Coming to Canada with nothing, he had bought the land on less than the proverbial shoestring. That he was unwise in paying money to the Indians themselves instead of to the trustees is certain. But this may have been due to a misunderstanding, and at the most it was imprudent. There is every indication that he purposed to pay off the mortgage and give each purchaser a clear title to his land. This was done to the satisfaction of all. It has been necessary to give the story at some length and in considerable detail in order to establish all this, but it is both a pleasure and a duty to vindicate a man with whom our ancestors had such a vital business association.

We must now consider Ezra Eby's account of the whole affair. He states that in January, 1803, Samuel Bricker first heard of the mortgage, which was for $20,000; that in January, 1804, one year later, the settlers decided to send Samuel Bricker and Joseph Sherk to Pennsylvania to raise the money; that in April, 1804, the joint stock company was organized at the home of "Hannes" Eby in Lancaster; that the $20,000 was brought here, (he does not say when) and after some delay everything was paid and clear title received in June, 1805. In the light of the foregoing government records it will be necessary to modify Eby's account somewhat. His statement that it was in January, 1803, that the settlers discovered the mortgage seems correct. But since we now know of the November, 1803, agreement, signed by Daniel Erb and Samuel Bricker, his statement that it was not until January, 1804, that help was requested from Pennsylvania seems inaccurate. By this agreement we know that Daniel Erb had just arrived in Canada in the fall of 1803; "late of the County of Lancaster." According to Eby, Daniel Erb did not come until 1807. Now since Erb did arrive as a settler in November, 1803, and took at once the leading part in the land agreements, we can justly infer that the relatives in Pennsylvania knew about the trouble during the year 1803. And since the purchase price of 10,000 pounds is explicitly stated in this agreement we may be sure that arrangements had already been made to raise the sum in Pennsylvania. Certainly the settlers in Canada in 1803 could have made no such agreement without the backing of

their brethren in Lancaster. We may conclude then, that it was in April, 1803, not April, 1804 (as Ezra Eby states), that the meeting was held in the home of "Hannes" Eby in Lancaster. However, since the first instalment was not paid until May 23, 1804, it is quite likely that a meeting was held in the "Hannes" Eby home in April, 1804, at which time the money was actually turned over. During that month, then, the famous "weggli" (cart) probably carried the silver to Canada for the first payment. How the second payment, another $20,000, was brought we do not know. It is only fair to emphasize that Ezra Eby's account is on the whole accurate. These few changes are more in the nature of additions than alterations. He still remains the best single source of the early history of our county. His account of the meeting in which "Hannes" Eby persuaded his brethren that it was their Christian duty to help their fellow Mennonites even though they did not recover the money is feelingly written. Without his good work this tale, so worthy of preservation, would have been forgotten. This motive of helping brethren has been uppermost in all similar transactions since that time. Nor has the trust ever been betrayed.

With clear title to the land established, settlement again went on rapidly. In the three years of 1805, 1806, and 1807, at least thirty-five Mennonite families moved in from Pennsylvania. This more than doubled the population of the settlement. Among the names[3] we note the well known ones of: Stauffer, Bauman, Eby, Schneider, Erb, Shantz, Cressman and Weber. Strangely enough, in 1807 four men came together to Waterloo County whose lots, which they purchased from the German Company, now comprise the greater part of the present city of Kitchener. Each lot contained 448 acres. These four men were: Joseph Schneider, whose first sawmill, built in 1816, was the beginning of industrial Berlin; Benjamin Eby, who soon became the religious and secular leader of the community; Abraham Weber, father of Abraham C. Weber, the preacher; and Samuel Eby, first deacon of the Mennonite Church in Waterloo County.

It may be of some interest to trace the boundaries of these lots as nearly as we can determine in our present-day city. Joseph Schneider's lot was No. 17 of the company survey. Commencing at the rear of the Merner Block, now occupied by the Bank of Nova

3. For a complete list, see Ezra Eby, *History of Waterloo Township*.

Scotia, the line runs west through the property of the Waterloo County Trust Company, thence on west approximately through the centre of the baseball park, and continues west to the city limits including all of the Victoria Park property, thence along the western boundary of the city, thence eastward toward King to about the point of the Grand River railway crossing on Cedar Grove Avenue; thence the line runs to the starting point in the rear of the Merner Block, cutting across Albert just north of Church Street, across Eby at the intersection of Alma, across Benton on the rear of the old post-office property and across Owen at the Walper House corner. Benjamin Eby's Lot was No. 2. Commencing at the same point as with the Joseph Schneider lot, the line runs northeast to the corner of Queen and Weber Streets and along Weber to Frederick; thence along Frederick to the limits at Edna Street, thence along Edna to the boundary between the present Samuel Brubacher and M. L. Shuh farms, thence westward along this line which soon forms the boundary of the Sheppard school property, to the northeast corner of the Mennonite cemetery, thence across the cemetery to the corner of Cedar Grove and King; thence along Cedar Grove to the Grand River Railroad Crossing; from thence along the boundary of lot 17 to the starting point. Samuel Eby's lot was No. 3. Commencing again at the common starting point in the rear of the Bank of Nova Scotia, the line follows the boundary of Benjamin Eby's lot to Edna Street, thence north along the city limits to a point about where the Dumart packing plant now stands; thence west across Lancaster to the corner of Wilhelm and Edward Streets; thence south along Edward to Francis and along the latter to Water, thence west along Water to King and east on King to the starting point. Abraham Weber's lot was No. 16. Commencing at the common starting point the line runs westward along the limits of the Joseph Schneider property, thence north to Glasgow Road, thence east on Glasgow road and across King to Wilhelm and Edward Streets, thence along the boundary of the Samuel Eby lot back to the common starting point. A citizen of Kitchener will readily see that these four lots, comprising 1792 acres in all, form the greater part of our present city. These lines are not given with a surveyor's preciseness but they are exact for the purpose of the average reader.

Naturally since they had moved into a forest wilderness, the first efforts of the pioneers were to establish homes. What manner

of homes they had may perhaps be conjectured from a description of homes given in the history of the Dumfries settlement.[4] "The houses were invariably of unhewn logs, chinked with clay. The earliest of them were very rude. They seldom had any divisions except the loft above; this was reached by means of a ladder, and it was rare when the daylight could not be seen streaming through numerous apertures in the roof. Whatever else it lacked, the house invariably possessed a large open fireplace." Although not written of Waterloo township, this may not be an unfair picture of the homes of our ancestors. However, it is certain that the homes were rapidly improved. Apart from the clearing of land and erecting of homes, the building of roads was an important matter. On February 5, 1811,[5] the settlers appealed for the sum of one hundred pounds from the Legislature to complete a road "to the inhabited part of the county in the neighborhood of the head of Lake Ontario." This was the road to Dundas. The petition states that the petitioners had already expended one thousand dollars on the project as well as their voluntary labor, and that their funds were then exhausted. When we note that the settlement at that time probably did not contain more than fifty families we can see the magnitude of the undertaking for the pioneers. It is not surprising that they ran out of funds. The wonder is that they raised as much as they did.

Another matter that at first gave our ancestors some difficulty was their relationship with the Indians. From a letter[6] of the governor's secretary, of Upper Canada, to Colonel Clause, Indian agent, and dated Oct. 27, 1804, we learn of an attack on John Erb, "late of the State of Pennsylvania in the county of Lancaster, a purchaser of part of the lands sold by Mr. Beasley, which was with a malicious intention. Shot at and wounded by a Mississague Indian, known by the name of Jack. The wound will most probably not prove mortal, but Mr. Erb's arm is much shattered, and he has received hurt on other parts of the body.—" On February 18, 1808, a petition was presented to the Legislative Assembly, which mentions that, "a certain Abraham Stouffer of our township, was shot by a drunken Indian through his arm and other places, and was

4. James Young, *History of Galt and Dumfries,* p. 43.
5. 1927 *Annual Report of Waterloo County Historical Society,* p. 342.
6. *Ibid.,* p. 338.

then in danger of his life." The petition states also that liquor is being sold by traders to Indians so that the adults are too drunk to hunt, scare people by their bad behavior, and leave their young ones to go about begging for food. The request is made that such trading in spirits be stopped. However it is clear that the mischief was done by individual Indians and as the result of their intoxicated state. As a tribe the Indians caused no trouble, and it was not long until the settlers and the individual Indians thoroughly trusted each other. A well established story tells that on cold winter nights the Indians used to sleep around the fireplace on the kitchen floors of the settlers' homes.

So much on material and social affairs. Let us turn now to religious and educational matters. Of course these, as they always are, were closely linked together. Coming to Canada as they did for religious freedom, our ancestors did not neglect worship. Joseph Bechtel was ordained a minister in 1804, probably by a bishop from the "Twenty." He was the first minister in the county, not only of the Mennonites but of any other church. Up to 1809 he was the only minister. On November 27 of that year Benjamin Eby was ordained. Since the activities of this man loom large in the following history, it behooves the careful historian to permit the records to speak for themselves. Only one glimpse of the character of this man can be given at this time. It is a note from the diary[7] of H. W. Peterson, long an intimate associate of Benjamin Eby, dated, Nov. 18, 1832. It says, "Staid all day at Benjamin Eby's, went with him and his family to the meeting or church. He prayed and preached well. He is Bishop of the Mennonite Society of Waterloo. He is a good man." Mr. Peterson having just arrived, this was his first impression. How just it was the following pages will help to show. With his ordination, Benjamin Eby at once began to urge the building of a church. Worship had been held in private houses, but the new minister urged that the time had now arrived for a meeting house. The first step was the securing of land. This was done in 1810. On June 1, of that year Joseph Eby sold Lot No. 1 of the German Company Tract to Jacob Shantz, reserving, however, one half acre for church building and graveyard. No deed was made out for this church property at this time. It was merely reserved.

Of this, more later. In this same year another important matter

7. In the possession of Dr. A. E. Byerly of Guelph, Ontario.

engaged the attention of our forefathers. On Feb. 3, 1810, a petition was presented to the Legislative Assembly by Mr. T. B. Gough, the member for the east riding of York and Simcoe. It is so important that it deserves to be given in its entirety.

> To the Honorable the Speaker and Members of the House of Commons of Upper Canada, in Parliament assembled.
>
> The Petition of the Society of people called Mennonists and Tunkers,
>
> Humbly Sheweth,
>
> That by an act of the Province passed in the thirty-third year of his Majesty's reign, Your petitioners, after producing a certificate from three or four respectable people, one of whom must be a preacher in the society to which they belong, shall pay in time of peace Four Dollars a year, and in time of invasion or insurrection Twenty Dollars a year, for which favorable law and liberty of conscience we are thankful to God and the Government under which we live. And Whereas many of our sons now under age and incapable of judging in matters of conscience, are not as yet actually considered as church members, and cannot of course secure the necessary certificates, we therefore humbly pray the same indulgence may be extended to them that is granted to ourselves, their parents, that is, that they may be exempted from serving in the Militia by paying the commutation money until they arrive at the age of twenty-one or until they be admitted as church members.
>
> And Your Petitioners further pray that your Honorable Body will take into your consideration the many difficulties which poor people, with large families, have to labour under in new settlements, and if you in your wisdom should deem meet to lessen the burden of our commutation money your petitioners as in duty bound, shall every pray.

This was signed by two preachers, two elders, and thirty-five members of the "Society of Mennonists" and "Tunkers." The two preachers certainly were Joseph Bechtel and Benjamin Eby. The two elders, or deacons, were Samuel Eby and Jacob Bechtel. This petition shows a thoughtful and necessary concern for their young men. The payment of such annual exemption money, together with other community expenses such as that of roads, not to mention the struggle to build homes, probably explains why no meeting house was built for the first number of years. On October 11, 1812, Benjamin Eby was ordained a bishop. The following year, 1813, he realized his dream, and due largely to his efforts a meeting house was put up. What month it was built we do not know, probably during the summer. It was a log structure of modest dimensions.

This was the first church building, erected solely for religious worship, in Waterloo county.

At this point we must consider the size and bounds of this congregation. From an examination of the deeds, we know that the other Mennonite meeting houses were built after this. The Martin's and Snyder's churches came next. The deed of the latter church, dated 1878 and not the original one, states that the first building was erected on those grounds "in or about or prior to the year 1826." Others have put the date as early as 1814, which seems far too much advanced. It is likely that the church may have been built in 1820. Tradition has it that the Martin church was built at the same time. The deed of the first church in the Wanner district is dated March 15, 1830. That of the first church in the Hagey district is 1834. However, these dates do not accurately portray the situation. We know that up to the spring of 1805 all the newcomers had settled around Preston, Blair, Doon and Freeport. After that the great majority settled farther north around and near what became Berlin. Although there was no church building, Ezra Eby tells us that a school was built in 1802 in what became Blair. It also seems likely that a school was built on the Mennonite cemetery grounds one and a half miles northeast of Preston,[8] at what is now called "Hagey's." Ezra Eby also tells us that one John Beatty opened a school in a school building near the bridge at the end of Mill Street in 1809. Whether these various schools were used for church services we do not know. Certainly school and church were very closely associated in the early days, as will be shown later. However, there are just as good grounds for supposing that worship was held in private houses as some writers state. If such meetings can be called a congregation or church, then the first in the county was certainly in the vicinity of what is now Preston, either near Blair or northeast of Preston. But this is not a clear interpretation. A congregation is usually associated with a church building; and vice versa. In this sense the log church erected near the "Sand Hills," the first name of this community, was the first church and all its members formed the first congregation. In this number we may include all the Mennonites who had come to the Grand River basin up to this year. All of them undoubtedly worshipped at "Ben

8. See "Reminiscences of Early Waterloo" by Sheriff Allen in 1925 *Annual Report of the Waterloo County Historical Society.*

Eby's," as the church was known. The charter members of this church may be named as follows, giving only the heads of families for the sake of brevity, although certainly including the wives. In a few cases widows were the heads of their respective families. Thus in the order of arrival:

Joseph Sherk
Samuel Betzner
Samuel Betzner, Sr.
John Reichert
Christian Reichert
David Gingerich
Abraham Gingerich
George Bechtel
Abraham Bechtel
Jacob Bechtel
Dilman Kinsey
Benjamin Rosenberger
John Biehn, Sr.
John Biehn, Jr.
George Clemens (single)
Michael Baer
Andrew Sararas
John Shupe
George Shupe
John Livergood
Joseph Wismer
David Wismer
Christian Schlichter
Joseph Bechtel
John Bricker
Samuel Bricker
Widow of Michael Groh
John Erb
Abraham Stouffer
Samuel Stouffer
Daniel Stouffer
William Correll
Henry Kroft
Peter Hammacker
Matthias Scheirich
Christian Bauman
Samuel (Indian Sam) Eby
George Eby
Joseph Eby
Jacob Schneider
Christian Schneider
Abraham Erb
Jacob Erb
Simon Cress
Widow Brech
Philip Bliehm
Christian Shantz
Abraham Shantz
Isaac Shantz
William Rotharmal
David Strohm
Jacob Strohm
Abraham Cressman
Joseph Schneider
Benjamin Eby
Peter Erb
Joseph Risser
Samuel Eby
David Eby
Daniel Eby
Abraham Weber
John Eckert
Frederick Eckert
Widow Barbara Shantz
David Schantz
Joseph Shantz
John Cressman
Christian Eby
Abraham Clemens
Christian Shantz
Jacob Shantz
Cornelius Pannebecker
Henry Wanner

Seventy-three names in all. Nor is this list complete. Ezra Eby mentions "The Ringlers, Cornels, and Saltzbergers, and others." Of the above named one was a bachelor and two were widows. Thus the log church of 1813 had not less than 150 members. Benjamin Eby and Joseph Bechtel were the preachers, Samuel Eby the deacon. Certainly this was an auspicious beginning.

Despite the exemption privilege for the commutation money as provided by the act of 1792, some of the Mennonites were pressed into transport service during the war of 1812-13, between the district and Detroit. A statement of their losses, dated November 1, 1813, has been found by Brig. Gen. E. A. Cruickshank. This document was published in the January, 1929 issue of the MENNONITE QUARTERLY REVIEW in an article entitled, "New Source Material

for the History of the Mennonites of Ontario." The paper lists the claims. The first one which we give here, is typical:

"The said George Bechtel lost in a waggon one horse and harness and halter chain one new blanket and a Grate Boat and a Three Bushel Bag." (Punctuation and spelling as in the original.) The value of this claim was 96 pounds. To give an idea of the extent of the losses we shall give the names and amounts of losses stated in the government list. (Stated in terms of pounds):

John Bricker 60	Henry Wanner 188	Cornelius Pannebecker 8
Joseph Wismer 65	Christian Richert 70	Philip Pliem (Bliehm) 60
Jacob Snyder 67	Samuel Slichter 6	Samuel Betzner 27
Peter Erb 90	John Biehn 48	Jacob Erb 45
Joseph Snyder 110	Jacob Bechtel 85	Henry Lund 32
Gerhard Willer 55	Joseph Eby 120	
John Shiry 77	Abraham Biehn 7	

These names are very representative of the community. Moreover, the list shows that the government dealt very generously with our forefathers in this matter.

The following years were ones of work and steady progress. The community was now known simply as "Ben Eby's," according to Mr. Jacob Stroh[9] of Waterloo, and not as "Ebytown" as has so often been stated. The summer of 1816 was one of anxiety. It was "the cold summer." On June 1 there was ice in the swamps thick enough to bear men and waggons. On June 21, quite a lot of snow fell. Yet it was a year of progress, despite this. In this year Joseph Schneider started his sawmill near the corner of the present Ontario South and King streets. On February 15 of this year the first deed was drawn up for church property, "by and between Joseph and Elizabeth Eby and Jacob and Mary Shantz of the first part and the elders of the Mennonist Society, John Gresman and Jacob Snyder, parties of the second part." These owners sold to the church one acre for the sum of ten dollars. Included in this deed was the half acre donated by Joseph Eby in 1810, so that the entire deed reads for one and a half acres. This land was all taken from Lot 1 of the German Company Tract. Several interesting things may be deduced from this document. John Cressman and Jacob Snyder were the first trustees, although we do not know the exact date of their appointment.

9. Mr. Stroh was born in 1847. His recollections are clear and accurate.

Then too we can determine rather exactly the location of the log church on the church property. All the later property was from Lot 2. On Oct. 7, 1816, the same year, Benjamin Eby gave three-fourths of an acre to the church. However, since the church was built in 1813 we know it was built on that original one-half acre given by Joseph Eby from Lot 1 where it joins Lot 2. Hence the log church was built in the southeast corner of the present church property. An additional point of interest is the price of the land. The German Company bought the land in 1805 for less than $1 per acre. Now in 1816 an acre changes hands for $10. Evidently the community was getting along. One more point must be noted. The property was "for the use of building a meeting house thereon for the said society and for such meetings as the landholders and their successors shall give privilege to meet thereon as also for a public schoolhouse and graveyard." This emphasized anew the close connection between church and school in those early days. How else could matters be? In the beginnings of all communities organizations must be as simple as possible. Of course the church was already built. The school was soon to follow.

In 1817 the name Waterloo was given to the township, although this immediate locality was still known simply as "Ben Eby's." According to Mr. Thomas Pearce,[10] Benjamin Eby built a frame annex to the log meeting house, with a movable partition between it and the main building, a few years after the log house itself was erected. This may have been as early as 1815. It was done because on some occasions the original house was too small to hold all who came to hear him. In this annex Bishop Eby began his German school in the winter of 1818-19, which he continued until the '40s, although not every winter. When the frame church was built in 1834 this annex was left in the southeast corner and became known as the "Red Schoolhouse."

Materials available for the decade of 1820 to 1830 are scanty. Among them we note a letter by Joseph Snyder of Berlin, Ontario to his brother Henry Snyder of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.[11] In it he lists the bishops, preachers and deacons for Wilmot and Waterloo Townships. Wilmot: John Guengerich, Deacon, John Weaver, Deacon; Waterloo: Benjamin Eby, Bishop; Preachers,

10. Thomas Pearce, "School History of Waterloo County and Berlin" in *Waterloo County Historical Society Annual Report,* Vol. 1, p. 36.

11. H. S. Bender, "Ontario Mennonite Source Material" in *Mennonite Quarterly Review,* January, 1929, p. 50.

Joseph Bauman, Joseph Bechtel, Martin Baer, Henry Shue, Henry Weber; Deacons, Christian Boeringer, Jacob Bechtel, Abraham Clemens, Samuel Eby, Peter Burkhart, Jacob Snyder. Just how these men were allotted as to churches is very difficult to determine at this date. *An Ecclesiastical Chart for Upper Canada for 1828*[12] gives an idea of the membership. It states the number of Tunkers and Mennonites to be 1,164 members and 2,388 hearers. Of this total 107 members and 357 hearers were definitely Amish. Nor were the Tunkers strong in members. We may safely say then, that the Mennonites had 1000 members and 2000 hearers at this time. Some question might arise as to who the hearers were. Since 1812 Germans had been coming to the district in ever increasing numbers. As all preaching in the Mennonite church was in German these would naturally attend the "Ben Eby" meeting house. Whether these would account for the total of 2,000 we cannot exactly determine. It might be noted here too, that at this time immigration from Pennsylvania had practically ceased. How many had come in this quarter century? According to the arrivals listed in Ezra Eby's history no less than 300 families had come in from Pennsylvania during this time. This number would easily account for the 1000 members listed above. As it was the custom in those days for children to remain out of the church until they were of age, these would account for some of the hearers.

It was between 1825 and 1830 that John Hoffman and Samuel Bowers started the first furniture factory in the village. The story illustrates another phase of the character of Benjamin Eby. Hoffman and Bowers asked a number of people for land; but in vain. Finally they came to Benjamin Eby. On being told what they wanted, he readily told them he would give them all the land they required for their factory. According to Mr. W. V. Uttley,[13] the village name was changed from the customary "Ben Eby's" to Berlin in 1833. This seems the correct date. Tradition has it that Benjamin Eby himself suggested the new name. Coming by chance one day into a shop where were gathered a group of men discussing a suitable name for the village, he suggested Berlin, as he knew that there were many Germans in the place. By this time land values had

12. *Ibid.*

13. W. V. Uttley, "Joseph Schneider: Founder of the City" in the 1929 Annual Report of the *Waterloo County Historical Society*, p. 115.

gone up, indicating the growing prosperity. In the April 24, 1845, issue of the *Deutsche Canadier* the writer found a loose sheet listing the land purchases for 1833. These were sold from Lot 4. There were 16 purchases of which these are representative:

2	Benjamin Eby	11½ acres	$13.50	per acre	$155.25
3	Benjamin Eby	11½ "	12.00	" "	138.00
6	Samuel Bauman	11½ "	12.50	" "	143.75
8	Daniel Snyder	11½ "	14.00	" "	164.00
9	Daniel Snyder	10½ "	6.25	" "	65.62½
15	Christian Erb	10½ "	27.00	" "	283.50

Evidently location caused a considerable variation in the price.

At this point we must digress slightly to record the first deed on church property in the Wanner district. It is dated March 15, 1830, and states that the property is for use of "the Tunker or Mennonist or any other Society." However, it also provides that in case trustees of other societies be in the majority that the rules shall not be repugnant to the Rules of the Tunker and Mennonist Society. This was a meeting house and school house and was built on the lot of the old Bechtel estate across the Preston Hespeler highway from C. T. Groh's present residence. It may be added here that the original deed of the present Wanner church is dated October 13, 1837. It too is for "the sole purpose of a Meeting House, School House, and Burial Grounds for the Mennonist and Tunker Societies." As with the other deed, the trustees must be of these societies. These deeds illustrate so well the manner in which our ancestors worked in religious and educational matters that no comment is required.

The year of 1834 was a time of severe trial to the settlers. In July came the cholera. Whether it broke out first in Galt or Berlin is not clear. But its ravages in both places were terrible. Since the Berlin records are not specific it may not be amiss to quote from Mr. Young's history of Galt[14]. A wild animal exhibition was given in Galt on July 28. It was a trainer of this show who brought the plague. This was on a Monday. And now we may quote directly. "Chiefly before Friday night, but certainly within a week, nearly one-fifth of all the villagers had fallen victims to the plague." Within 26 hours, 35 died; this out of a population of 250 people. It is altogether likely that the mortality in Berlin was equally high. Fortunately the plague did not last more than a week. What an anxious time this must have been.

14. *Op. cit.* p. 100.

But the year 1834 was not all calamity. That summer the frame church which stood until 1902, was built on the site of the present brick church. An early directory[15] states that the cost of the building was $800 with seating accommodation for 700. It was at this time that the frame annex remained in the southeast corner as "The Red School House." The frame church was still the only church building in the Berlin community. Mr. Jacob Stroh says positively that the next meeting house was not built until 1842. This was undenominational and was erected in the centre of Berlin. It was dedicated on Christmas of 1842. Later it served successively as school and village hall.

Brief mention must be made of legal and medical services. It was not until 1830 that the first doctor came, so says Mr. Stroh. In 1832 H. W. Peterson arrived. He served as the first magistrate. Before this all cases had to be taken to York or Hamilton. However, it is safe to say that there was little need for a magistrate. The irregularities that developed were handled by the church itself or the "Gemaeh" as it was put (German dialect for *Gemeinde*). From an old resident we learn of one such incident. Bushel measures were made of wood at the local cooperage. A certain church member, it is said, had unusually large measures. Then, in buying from a neighbor, he packed the commodity down as much as he could. The non-church member, being dissatisfied, brought the matter to the attention of the "Gemaeh" which presumably disciplined the member. The chief value in the story is in the illustration it gives of how disputes were handled in those early days. It virtually amounted to community rule.

In the year 1835, occurred an event of the utmost importance to the village. This was the founding of the publishing and printing business managed by H. W. Peterson. That such an enterprise had long been desired we may infer from the progressive spirit of the community in school matters. Another fact that establishes this is the printing at Ephrata in 1824 on request[16] and at the expense of the Waterloo community, of a *Katechismus oder Kurze und Einfältige Erklärung aus der heiligen Schrift in Fragen und Antworten für Kinder zum Gebrauch in den Schulen* (Catechism or Short and Plain Instruction from the Holy Scriptures, in Questions and An-

15. James Sutherland, *County of Waterloo Gazetteer and Directory for* 1864, p. 88.
16. H. S. Bender, *Two Centuries of American Mennonite Literature,* pp. 12 and 15.

swers for Children's Use in the Schools). This book was undoubtedly used in Benjamin Eby's German school. Had it been possible to establish a printery in Berlin at that time it would likely have been the first Ontario Mennonite publication in 1824. But it was not until eleven years later in 1835 that such a project was possible in Berlin. On August 27, 1835, there appeared the first issue of *Das Canadische Museum,* likely the first inland publication in Ontario west of Dundas and Toronto. It is a fine example of the enterprise of the settlers. The first page tells us who the founders and subscribers of this paper were. The publisher and editor was H. W. Peterson, of whom we must give a short biographical note. He came to the district late in 1832, as his diary indicates, from Virginia. He was a German Lutheran and came as a lay preacher to his co-religionists in this district, who by this time were quite numerous. However, since there was no Lutheran Church yet, there is every indication that he worshipped at "Ben Eby's." His report of the Ontario conference of that year, in the October 20, 1836, issue of the *Museum* speaks so feelingly of the brethren who were there that he unquestionably considered himself and was thought of by them as one of their number. His fellow Lutherans must have formed a large part of the 2,000 hearers mentioned in the ecclesiastical chart of 1828. When he arrived he joined them in worship. The *Museum* was printed only five years during which time he was editor and publisher. From a personal note by Peterson written on the margin of an *Ober Canada Calender* for 1840[17] we know that on December 17 of that year he joined the Methodist meeting. In 1842 he moved to Guelph as registrar of the district of Wellington. He was well-qualified for this task of editor, being thoroughly educated in German and English. He was somewhat of a poet and used to write short poems.

Such was the man who was the friend and associate of Benjamin Eby. In fact it was most certainly these two men who conceived and organized the printing enterprise. In his "To our Subscribers" on page 1 of the first issue and beginning "Dear Friends," he declares his obligation to tell to whom he is indebted for the founding of this printery. In the future he wishes to tell in greater detail but for the present, "I must conclude with my special and warmest thanks to my oft proven friends, Benjamin Eby and Jacob S. Schumacker;

17. In the possession of Dr. A. E. Byerly.

both of whom from the first moment that I busied myself with the erection of this printery, up to the present time, have come powerfully to my aid with counsel and help." The business was organized as a stock company, one share costing twenty dollars and half shares being available. This money was loaned for five years without interest. At the end of this time Mr. Peterson could purchase the plant by repaying these shares. Since the paper ran only five years we may conclude that Peterson was unable to repay this money and then got out of business. In 1841 *Der Deutsche Canadier* was founded. On what terms the new company, of which Henry Eby, son of Benjamin, was publisher, took over the printing plant, we do not know. Among the shareholders of the *Museum* we note many Mennonites. Benjamin Eby bought two shares and Jacob Schumacker one. Others were

Benjamin Bowman	Daniel Martin	Jacob Shantz Jr.
Henry B. Bowman	David Martin	Joseph Shantz
Jonathan B. Bowman	Henry Martin	Isaac Shantz
John Bechtel	Joseph C. Martin	Jacob C. Schneider
Levi Bechtel	John Martin	Joseph Schneider Jr.
John Brubacker	Christian Shantz Jr.	Henry Wanner
Daniel Erb	Christian Shantz	Abraham Weber
Joseph Erb	Jacob Shantz	Isaac Eby

This issue of the paper states that there were 25 houses in Berlin that year, possibly 150 people. Of course the farming community aided in the enterprise. It was this press which published Benjamin Eby's books, of which more later.

It is through the new paper, the *Canada Museum,* that we first learn of the Ontario Conference of Mennonites. The October 13, 1836 issue (Thursday) of the paper says that "Tomorrow the great conference of the Mennonites begins in the Benjamin Eby meeting house." The article mentions two questions which the conference has for consideration. This was the matter of endorsing the publication of a monthly periodical partly religious, partly secular, edited by a brother appointed by conference. The second question asks whether conference will support this paper financially. It is to contain 16 pages and cost $1.00 per year. No mention of this paper appears again. In the next issue of the *Museum,* October 20, Peterson gives a report of the conference but says nothing about the paper. Evidently the conference, whether for religious or financial reasons, refused to support the proposed paper and the project

was abandoned. Mr. Peterson's comments on the conference are wholly concerning its religious nature. No mention is made of business. He mentions as being present from a distance the brethren Huber, Schwarz, Troyer, Zewetz, and Daniel Hoch. Communion was held at this conference, which seems to have been a custom at conferences. It would seem as though Peterson partook of this. Since we have so little information of these early conferences it may be well to translate a short paragraph which gives the spirit of the conference.

"All the teachings which we heard here in the discourses of the worthy brethren, we can interpret in no other way than as apostolic Christian and truly evangelical, that is to say, as far as our fallible insight penetrates into the weighty teachings of Jesus and his apostles." The question naturally arises whether this was the first conference of Ontario Mennonites. We know that the first conference calendars were printed in 1836 because the 1875 calendar, of which a copy is extant, names this the 40th issue. Since there was no press in Berlin before August, 1835, it is not necessarily true that the first printed calendar was of the first conference. At the beginning of his October 20 article Mr. Peterson says that it was the first time he had the opportunity of attending such a conference. If the word "such" were "this" then we could be sure that this was not the first Ontario conference. Yet had it been the first it is practically certain that Mr. Peterson would have explicitly said so. Where the conference began we do not know. When we take into account the enterprise of Bishop Eby, the printing of the catechism in Ephrata in 1824 for use in his school, we are not far amiss in thinking that the conference was held at least as early as 1830, if not 1825. This, of course cannot be established as a matter of fact, yet it seems reasonably probable.

The earliest marriage ceremony performed by Bishop Eby, of which we have record, is mentioned in the March 26, 1836, issue of the *Museum*. On March 13, Benjamin Eby married Daniel Romer and Catherine Huber, both of Markham. Since it was in 1831 that a law was passed permitting all ministers to perform marriage ceremonies[18] it is likely that he performed many between this date and 1836, but this is the first of which we have a record.

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18. M. G. Scherck, *Pen Pictures of Early Pioneer Life in Upper Canada*, p. 79.

On April 7, 1836, he married Henry Schneider and Elizabeth Schneider.

Another point that may be mentioned arises from an item in the November 24, 1836, issue of the *Canada Museum* as follows: "A strange pig has appeared on the premises of the undersigned near Berlin. The owner is requested to declare his property and after the payment of the entailed expenses to fetch it of Benjamin Eby." Mr. Jacob Stroh says that before 1835 such announcements were made from the pulpit of the Eby meeting house. What else, indeed, could be done? There was no press. There was no other public meetinghouse or place.

Following the account of the founding of the printing press it may be well to list[19] the church publications of that establishment. In 1836 the first *Meeting Calendar,* referred to above, was printed. H. S. Bender estimates that this may be the oldest regular continuing periodical published by Mennonites anywhere in the world. In the same year appeared *Die Gemeinschaftliche Liedersammlung* (Church Hymnbook). Since so few of the hymns are of Mennonite origin, although they are evangelical in content, it is possible, although doubtful that Henry Peterson rather than Benjamin Eby edited the book. In 1839 was printed *Christlicher Gemueths Gespraech* (Edifying Christian Discourses on Saving Faith, for Youth, in Questions and Answers). The book consists of four parts, one of which is Christian Burkholder's *Nützliche und Erbauliche Anrede an die Jugend* first printed in Pennsylvania 1804 (Useful and Instructive Addresses for Youth). There is nothing original in the book, but it is likely that Benjamin Eby compiled it. In the same year, 1839, appeared Benjamin Eby's *Neues Buchstabir und Lesebuch* (New Spelling and Reading Book). This was for German schools and was his own work entirely, the first from his pen.

In 1840 Henry Eby (the new owner of the press) printed a group of letters from various European Mennonites to the Canadian community. In the next year, 1841, was published Benjamin Eby's best known work, his *Kurzgefasste Kirchengeschichte und Glaubenslehre der Taufgesinnten-Christen oder Mennoniten.* (Brief Church History and Confession of Faith of the Anabaptist Christians or Mennonites). This was his second original work as an author. His third and last was *Fibel zu den Ersten Lese Uebungen* (Spelling

19. Taken from H. S. Bender, *Two Centuries of American Mennonite Literature.*

Book for the First Reading Exercises). The second edition of this appeared in 1843. The date of the first is unknown. It may have been as early as 1839, as H. S. Bender suggests. In 1841 Henry Eby published a letter from Denmark to the Mennonite community in Canada. These, then, were all of the distinctively Mennonite publications from this press.

However, in 1844, Henry Eby published a book entitled, *Die Heils und Gnaden Ordnung nach dem Evangelium in vier Gesprächen vorgestellt, von David Hollaz, ehemals Prediger zu Günthersburg in Preuszen,* (Salvation and Grace according to the Gospel, Presented in Four Discourses, by David Hollaz, formerly Preacher at Günthersburg in Prussia). A copy of this was in Benjamin Eby's private library and is now owned by a grandson.[20] Since it may be of some interest we shall mention other books in that library. [All books are in German, but titles are here given in English translation]. Hübners *Bible History of the Old and New Testaments* (Philadelphia 1846); *Sermons at Church Festivals* by Herman Reeder of Weyerhof, printed at Leipzig in 1843. (This was a personal gift from the author to Bishop Eby); John Frederick Stark's *Daily Devotional Book; The Little Kempis or Maxims and Prayers of Thomas a Kempis* (printed at Harrisburg in 1828); *Ernsthafte Christenpflicht* (1846); *The Gate is Small and the Way is Narrow* (printed at Halle, in Waisenhause 1836); *Instruction for Brothers and Sisters Who Serve the Gospel among the Heathen* (Barby, to be found in the Brethren Communities, dated 1784); finally there is a book of political events in Germany, but since the title page is torn out the title and publisher cannot be given. The list serves to show Eby's wide church interests and connections, as his books from European Mennonites show some interest in general church history, Thomas a Kempis, and an interest in foreign missions. That he loved books is shown by the tastefully scrolled markers, with the inscription, "Benjamin Eby, his book," which are found in most of his books.

It was toward 1840 that Benjamin Eby began to cease teaching school. In the *Canada Museum* for 1838 the editor says it gives him great pleasure to announce that Benjamin Eby is again beginning a German school in the school house at "Ben Eby's" (The Red Schoolhouse). It is quite evident from this that he had not

20. Isaac M. Eby, Samuel Street, Kitchener, Ontario.

been teaching continuously since 1818-19. In December, 1836, and in March, 1837, we read of the three trustees, Benjamin Eby, Jacob Penner and H. W. Peterson, advertising for a German and English teacher. Thus in 1836 and 1837 he did not teach but began again in 1838. He seems to have resumed again only because it was difficult to get someone else. What probably happened is that the pressure of many duties prevented him from teaching continuously and made him glad to turn this work over to someone else. A notice in the Oct. 1, 1841, issue of *Der Deutsche Canadier* announces that Elias Eby is beginning a German school in the schoolhouse at Ben Eby's. He was the bishop's second son. Evidently the father was glad to turn over the teaching duties to the son.

It was in the same month of October, 1841, that a task was completed which had been begun in 1835. This was the building of a wall about the burial ground. It will be well to print the first notice in full. An advertisement in the October 29, 1835, issue of the *Canada Museum* reads as follows: "A meeting is requested on November 14, at one o'clock, of all those interested in the building of a stone fence about the cemetery at the Benj. Eby meeting house. All those who have signed to help are requested to attend." (signed) Isaac C. Shantz. Evidently the matter had been discussed before this but this was the first formal notice. Through the successive notices in the *Canada Museum* we can trace the procedure. In the November 19, 1835, issue we learn that the first meeting had been held and a committee consisting of Samuel Eby Sr., Isaac C. Shantz and Barnabas Devitt, appointed to oversee the project. The decision was to build a stone fence 38 feet long, along the street, and to enclose the other sides by a board fence. In the January 28, 1836, issue we learn that stone are being hauled for the entire four sides. It must have been an open winter. In the November 17, 1836 issue, that fall, we learn that a wall 567 feet long and 5 feet high was built during that summer. A distance of 490 feet was still to be built. In the February 9, 1837 issue we have a complete financial report with the names of all the subscribers. A wall of 565 feet (not 567) had been built in the summer of 1836. The donations varied from 50 cents to $16.00. Most gave $1.00 or $2.00. A few gave $4.00; only one, Benjamin Eby himself, gave $16.00. The enterprise was in the nature of a community undertaking, since many of the subscribers were not Mennonites. The total cash sub-

scribed was $335.31. However, this was not the sum total of the donations. Much free work was done. From one to two days of labor in hauling stone was given by a number, totalling 15 days in all. Another 43 days, no one man more than 4, were given to smooth the ground toward the road. Some work also was paid. The total expenses for stone, hauling stone, lime, mason work and wood were $329.45. There remained a balance of $5.86 plus enough stone to build a fence 150 feet long. Nothing more was done for a few years. In the April 16, 1841 issue of the *Deutsche Canadier* we read that a new committee, Jacob Shantz, Abraham Mayer and Elias Eby, had been chosen to complete the work. The October 15 issue of that year carried a notice signed by Eby and Mayer that the wall is now finished and requests subscribers to complete their payments. At last the work was done. What was the wall like? It was approximately 715 feet long, 5 feet high and two feet thick.[21] On top of it was a roof (Dachschwelle) of boards. This sloped at an angle of about 22 degrees outwards. It was built of narrow boards whose length was a little more than the thickness of the wall, since they projected a little. The stones used were field stone. There was a foundation of about six inches. Two openings were left in the wall, a narrow door for pedestrians toward the street, and a wide gate for teams on the church side. How long the wall stood is not known. Eventually the frost demolished it.[22] When we recall, as stated previously, that the cost in cash of the wall was about $350.00; as well as the fact that land, in smaller tracts was worth from $9.00 to $10.00 per acre, we see that the cost of the undertaking was the equivalent of not less than 35 acres of land. Certainly it was no mean undertaking.

Coming back more directly to the active church work we shall consider first the Sunday school. The very first mention we have is a personal note on the margin of H. W. Peterson's copy of the *Ober Canada Calendar* for 1839 (now owned by Dr. A. E. Byerly of Guelph, Ontario). It is dated Sunday, November 10 and reads as follows. "This day our dear little son Wm. is so far recovered that he has gone to the German Sunday school in Berlin. The day is fine." The very casualness of the note makes it certain that the school was well established. Probably it had been running several

21. Authority of Mr. Jacob Stroh.

22. For all these and the foregoing details I am indebted to Mr. Stroh.

years. But the questions still remain as to who conducted it and where. We know by several notices that "Ben Eby's" was no longer the only place of public assembly in Berlin. Notices in the *Canada Museum* for May 11 and July 27, 1839, tell of preaching service in the township hall and in private homes. The sects mentioned are Evangelicals, Baptists, and Methodists. Some denomination may have been holding a Sunday school in the township hall in 1839. Had the school been in the Ben Eby meetinghouse it is altogether likely that Mr. Peterson would have said so instead of "in Berlin" as he did. In those days the Eby church was well out of town. It is altogether likely that this was either an Evangelical or Baptist Sunday school since that would answer Mr. Peterson's description of "the German Sunday School in Berlin." What lends added support to this view is a notice which appeared in the *Deutsche Canadier* for April 23, 1841, announcing that a Sunday school is to be opened (eröffnet) in the schoolhouse at Ben Eby's, and signed by Elias Eby, Joseph C. Schneider and Christian Enslin. It will be noted that this was to be in the schoolhouse, not in the church, the school being a separate building at this time. However, the editorial in the first issue of the *Deutsche Canadier* for October, 1841 gives us more Sunday-school news. Some of it is worth quoting. It begins thus, "The Sunday School, started last year (1840), and begun anew this year, which has been held interchangeably in Wanner's and Bechtel's meetinghouses in the eastern part of Waterloo, is enjoying good progress. The number of children is increasing and mounted to 75 last Sunday." The next paragraph of the editorial says that the school in Benjamin Eby's schoolhouse has just begun again. But this is the old German school begun in 1818-19; and not a Sunday school. Had it been the latter the editor would have named it that, since he rejoices so much at the Wanner and Bechtel Sunday school. It is evident then that the Berlin Sunday school did not begin until 1841, as the April 23 notice in the *Deutsche Canadier* tells us, and that the Wanner-Bechtel Sunday school preceded it by one year. This was probably the first Mennonite Sunday school in the county. Mr. Peterson's son William must have attended another Sunday school held in the township hall.

The progress of the church membership may now be noted. The *Ober Canada Calendar* for 1840 (p. 36) gives a religious census for that year. Of the Mennonites it says that there are 4 bishops,

between 30 and 40 preachers, from 25 to 30 meetinghouses and 2,500 members. This is a gain of 1,000 members since 1828. Very good. A letter of Benjamin Eby to Europe in 1839[23] says that there were then 12 meetinghouses, 1 bishop, 14 preachers and 12 deacons in Waterloo. Eleven of those meetinghouses most probably were: Ben Eby's 1813; Martin's 1818, Snyders 1820, Cressman's 1828 or 30, Bechtel's (now Hagey's) 1824, Wanner's 1830, Detweiler's 1830, Geiger's 1831, Blenheim 1839, Mannheim 1839, Weber's 1839. The 12th is in doubt.

Few of the early printed conference reports have come down to us. The earliest extant is that of April 8, 1844, held at Berlin. Resolution 2 should be of general interest. Since the temperance question was being agitated and many members felt that total abstinence was seemly for Christians, a resolution was passed.

> Resolved,—That we recognize the Word of God and the fellowship of our Lord's Church as completely sufficient and binding, as well as the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit in the community, as adequate to keep the Church Member's body orderly in all things, and keep him from all irregularity and sin, so that there is no need to enter into special regulations, and to make special vows and undertake special resolutions and in particular with persons out of the church.
>
> And that we herewith request of each preacher in our conference that they shall endeavor to persuade all such members of our church, who have signed their names to any such temperance list, in a friendly, propitiating spirit instructing them from God's word that through such persuasion they may be induced to forsake the fellowship of such Temperance societies.
>
> At the same time the preachers are to be opportune in persuading their assembled church members to refrain from all habitual use of strong drink, and not use it any more, either they or their dependents, as indeed it is fitting and seemly and good for them to do.

It is plainly evident that the conference favored prohibition as a matter of Christian duty but not on the grounds of social and moral obligation.

Up to this time there had been only two preachers of the Eby church, Benjamin Eby and his oldest son Isaac. When the latter was ordained we do not know. Nor is there any record of his preaching. In the light of this the tradition that he never preached may be true. In 1850 Abraham C. Weber was ordained preacher for

23. *Mennonite Quarterly Review,* January, 1929, p. 52.

this place. Of his work little is known except that he was faithful to his trust.

On the 28th of June, 1853, Benjamin Eby died, aged 68 years, 1 month and 26 days. A full account of the funeral as well as a brief account of his activities, was written by his old friend, H. W. Peterson for the July 7, 1853, issue of the *Guelph Advertiser*. Of the man himself Mr. Peterson says, "The writer can truly say of him that he was, 'an Israelite in whom there was no guile,' and that he was sincerely pious, humble, exemplary, practical and non-sectarian, and eminently successful in his day and generation." That this is a just estimate of the man, the discerning reader of the foregoing pages will have seen. From some of his activities it may not be amiss, even at this day, to add to the picture. His was a many-sided personality. He was an organizer, for he established churches and schools, and encouraged a press and a factory. He was a sound business man, for we know by his purchases and his donations, invariably marked "paid," that he was successful financially. He was a teacher and preacher, eloquent but not oratorical, persuading rather by his good judgment than by his language. He was an author of three original books and compiler of several others. His outlook went beyond the confines of his community, as his letters to Europe testify. Yet his best energies were devoted to his home and community. His generosity is shown by the munificence of his donations, in money and in land. He was sufficiently open-minded and intelligent to work with all classes without compromising his own beliefs. His influence in the community is shown by the fact that for years the village was known as "Ben Eby's." And finally, the plainness of this name shows the simplicity of the man. These things we can justly infer from his activities. A more personal note is struck in an account written by a lifelong friend.[24] "He was a person of unblemished character, naturally of a sweet and gentle disposition, friendly and obliging, always ready to serve his friends in any way that he could by his interest and authority. This he did freely and generously. Not proud or haughty; serious in giving good counsel, and greatly esteemed for his integrity by all ranks and denominations. All very much desired his company and wholesome conversation. His sermons were full of good sense, very intelligible, lying parallel with the understanding of attentive hear-

24. *Daily Telegraph*, Berlin, Ontario, May 19, 1906.

ers." Mr. Peterson tells us that he was buried on Friday, July 1, 1853, having died on Tuesday, June 28. More than one thousand persons attended the funeral, upwards of 180 carriages being drawn up near the church. Preacher John Weber began the service by giving out a hymn. David Sherk and Joseph Hagey preached the sermons. Thus ended the life of this good man.

No matter how valuable a man, work must go on after his death. In 1854 Christian Eby, fifth son of Benjamin Eby, was ordained as a preacher for the Berlin Church. Of his work no details are available. He died in 1859 at the early age of 38 years. That his influence was great we may infer from the fact that after his father's death the church was known as the Christian Eby church and retained that name up to the building of the brick church in 1902.

With the death of Christian Eby ends the early part of the history of this Kitchener congregation. Surely it may deserve to be called the Eby period. Up to this time there were four preachers specifically ordained for this congregation. They were Benjamin Eby, Isaac Eby, Abraham C. Weber, Christian Eby. In this same period there were three deacons, Samuel Eby, Joseph E. Schneider and John Brubacker, dates of ordination not known. What the membership of the Eby church was in 1859 we do not know. However, the May 24, 1850, issue of the *Deutsche Canadier* states that there were more than 1,735 Mennonites in Waterloo township. A letter[25] by John Baer in 1858 gives some county figures on bishops, ministers, and meetinghouses: Waterloo Township—1 bishop, 10 preachers, 8 deacons, 7 meetinghouses; Wilmot—3 houses, 3 preachers, 3 deacons; Woolwich—3 houses, 3 preachers, 1 deacon; Dumfries—2 houses, 1 preacher, 1 bishop, 1 deacon; Blenheim—1 house, no ministers, 1 deacon; Blandford—1 house, no servants at all.

All these comprised what was called the Waterloo district, with a total of 2 bishops, Joseph Hagey and Henry Shantz, 17 preachers, 14 deacons and 17 houses. With this we conclude this period.

(To be concluded)

25. *Mennonite Quarterly Review,* January, 1929, p. 52.

MUTUAL AID AMONG MENNONITES

II

MUTUAL AID ACTIVITIES IN A SINGLE MENNONITE COMMUNITY

J. Winfield Fretz

The Community Selected for Special Study

In order to study the subject of mutual aid as it is practiced among the Mennonites more in detail than it has been studied up to this point, a specific Mennonite community has been selected on which to focus our attention. Mountain Lake, Minnesota, has been singled out as the community for this more detailed observation. There are a number of reasons for choosing Mountain Lake as the particular case for study. It is, first of all, typical of the majority of Mennonite communities in that it has the characteristic institutions, the customs, beliefs and patterns of behavior. Secondly, it is geographically isolated from other Mennonite communities, thus making it a separate unit easier to study. The population is a homogeneous one and not too large to complicate the study with too great a variety of cultural factors. Finally this particular community was attractive because of its unusually large number of mutual aid organizations.

Mountain Lake, a rural community in southwest Minnesota, about 125 miles from Saint Paul was originally settled by German and Scandinavian immigrants. When the Mennonites left Russia and came to America to look for new homes, a small number preferred the picturesque land and vigorous climate of Minnesota to the plains of Kansas and Nebraska where by far the majority of the Russian immigrants settled. Practically all of the Mennonite settlers arrived between the years of 1873 and 1879. Most of the early arrivals settled on railroad land, but some of the later settlers bought improved homesteads. No attempt was made to establish the Russian village system at Mountain Lake as was done in some of the settlements of Kansas and Manitoba. This was probably due to the fact that the land had already been improved and homes established, and the land was not purchased in large tracts as in other states.

The population of the town of Mountain Lake at the present time is about fourteen hundred. In the surrounding community there are approximately a similar number who consider Mountain Lake their shopping center. The majority of these 2,800 people are Mennonites of Russian stock who settled in this community in the late eighteen seventies. The town is typical of thousands in the Middle West; the streets are wide, the houses practically all single frame dwellings, the business places are those usually found in a small western town, all strung along the one main street. There are no manufacturing industries. The community is primarily a farming community. A large public school building and two good-sized hospitals, in addition to a nurses' home, are the most imposing buildings in the town. Practically all of the business men and civil officers are Mennonites. In this region are located five Mennonite churches. Despite the fact that the non-Mennonite in town is an exception, and that Mennonites generally are characterized as temperate and pious abstainers from all worldly pleasure, there are several beer parlors, taverns, and a pool room in this quiet little Mennonite village.

In studying the mutual aid activities in this community it will be necessary to distinguish between those activities of a mutual character which are strictly limited to Mennonites and those which are open to any one in the community—regardless of church affiliation. It will be observed that the motives behind the founding of the two different types of mutual aid seem to be religious in the one and economic in the other. Those organizations which are exclusively Mennonite are primarily benevolent in character; those organizations which are not strictly Mennonite are chiefly business concerns. The fact that the latter are mutual organizations rather than private businesses may be due in part to the spirit and practice of mutual aid in local religious organizations. It is also to be observed that the business organizations are operating under charter from the State, therefore they are permitted only the freedom granted by it to such organizations.

Let us now consider the various mutual aid activities in the Mountain Lake community.

Mennonite Aid Plan

One of the oldest mutual aid organizations in Mountain Lake is the Mennonite Aid Plan. This society was not organized in

Mountain Lake nor does it have its head office here. It is a national fire insurance organization exclusively Mennonite in character. The headquarters for the society are at Freeman, South Dakota, but the country is divided into districts and one of these is located in Mountain Lake. The motivations behind the founding of this organization were predominantly religious, as can be seen from the preface of a pamphlet written for the last triannual business meeting:

> The action of our conference in 1882, in regard to the brotherhood assisting each other in cases of loss by fire, lightning, or storm, has been met with general approval by most of the churches, both in the East and in the West, and we believe it will supply a long-felt want in the church in a manner that is entirely in accordance with the Word of God, without necessitating brethren to enter into the general insurance companies, against which many sincere brethren earnestly protest. We do not regard this plan as an insurance company, though it secures to the brethren who participate in it, the same benefits. It is simply a system through which the church is enabled more fully to carry out the apostolic admonition, 'Bear ye one another's burdens,' and to assist those who sustain losses from the causes mentioned above. We trust that this Plan may be the means of good; that through its adoption no one may be weakened in his faith, but that on the contrary the entire brotherhood may be encouraged to a deeper love and stronger sympathy for one another and to give cheerfully and systematically when losses occur, so that when one brother suffers all may suffer with him, and so help to bear one another's burdens.[1]

The Aid Plan insures all kinds of property for its members such as houses, barns, crops, automobiles, business houses, school houses (if they belong to Mennonites), saw mills, elevators, shops, engines, etc. It is of interest to note the spirit of brotherliness in which the Rules and Regulations of the Society are written. For instance Articles 30 and 31:

> Each brother shall consider it his duty to warn his brother if he sees him negligent in taking proper precaution to guard against fire.
>
> As the views of the brethren in regard to the value of property differ, the brethren are requested each one to act as his conscience dictates, to help bear one another's burden, and not to look on each other with suspicion, but to deal with one another as becometh Christians, in patience and charity.[2]

1. Rules and Regulations of the Mennonite Aid Plan (Mennonite Aid Plan, Freeman, South Dakota). It should be noted that this organization was first established in 1882 at Elkhart, Indiana under the Indiana Mennonite Conference which is the Conference mentioned in the Minutes. The Indiana Mennonites are not of Russian origin, but came via Pennsylvania from Switzerland and South Germany.

2. *Ibid.*

In another section of the by-laws one finds the Mennonite principles asserted on moral matters when the society forbids the insuring of saloons, pool halls, moving picture halls, and "similar establishments with their contents." Concerning the strict adherence to the policy of permitting only Mennonites as members one finds provisions clearly stated as follows:

> Where a member of the church is engaged in a co-partnership business with a party who is not a member of the church, the property, if taken into the Aid Plan, shall be taken at an amount not exceeding the amount of interest which the member of the church has in the business.
>
> * * * *
>
> Only members of an organized Mennonite Church may become members of the Aid Plan, also isolated church members. Members of a Missionary church claiming to be Mennonites are entitled to membership in the Aid Plan. Members of other denominations and members of secret societies shall be excluded. When a person is expelled or withdraws from the communion of the church for unchristian or immoral conduct, said persons shall not be permitted to enjoy privileges of the Aid Plan.[3]

A further evidence of the religious motivations behind this mutual aid organization is the way in which the triannual business meetings are conducted. An examination of the General Conference of the Mennonite Aid Plan minutes of the last meeting held in 1936 reveals that all sessions are opened and closed with prayer. Hymns such as "My Jesus, I Love Thee," "Rock of Ages," "My Faith Looks Up to Thee," as well as solos and duets in both the German and English language are sung at intervals throughout the session. The secretary gives evidence not only of religious influence but of the type of religion that pervades the Mennonite Aid Plan meeting, when he writes the closing paragraph thus:

> Motion was made to adjourn and ———— uttered a very inspired and sincere prayer in which every one present could heartily agree and were drawn heavenward, especially in the last thought, that if we should not meet this way again, we all might be favored to meet in the mansions of Our Heavenly Father, where we will praise Him and the Lamb. And while standing, we sang the closing song, 'Blessed Be the Tie that Binds!' In closing the writer can truly say that we have felt the Lord's blessing and presence through all the sessions and in the homes where we were privileged to visit.[4]

The only paid officer in the Aid Plan is the secretary who received

3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*

the modest salary of $1,000.00 a year. Other officers consider their positions honorary. The expenses of delegates to the triannual general business meeting are paid, thus making it possible for the poorer members to attend. The business is conducted according to accepted business methods and the meetings are conducted in a democratic fashion. The organization is a genuine mutual aid society. Evidence of this is expressed in one of the resolutions of the last general session:

> May we live true to our trust, so the work may continue to grow in power and in brotherly love. May the law of Christ, Galatians 6:2, 'Bear ye one another's burdens' be fully carried out.[5]

After fifty-six years of continuous service the Aid Plan still carries on with the same aims and ideals with which it began in 1882. While this organization was originated by Indiana (Non-Russian) Mennonites it had also been the custom in the Russian villages for the mutual fire insurance societies to require each home to be equipped with outside fire ladders and to have buckets of water available for all times. We see then that the Mennonites carried with them from country to country not only their religious principles and their ideals of home life but their methods of conservation of property and of mutual help and protection.

Mennonite Aid Society

The Mennonite Aid Society is in reality a life insurance company operated on the basis of a mutual association. The Mennonites have always avoided the term "life insurance" and have insisted on the name "aid society" although in all principal points there is no marked difference. While the general mutual aid idea was probably brought from Russia, the life insurance plan was not brought along because the Russian Mennonites at the time of migration had no organization to compare with what is now known as the Mennonite Aid Society. This is the only life insurance organization known among the Mennonites. There are many fire and storm protection societies but this is the only life insurance society. It should, however, be mentioned that within individual churches there are several mutual aid societies which pay death and sickness benefits. In at least two churches such organizations are known as "Friendly Societies." The assistance offered is very limited both as to finances

5. *Ibid.*

and members. The Mennonite Aid Society was organized in Mountain Lake, Minnesota. The story of the Society and the purpose of its founding was told to the writer by one of the original members and for over thirty years its secretary:

> A group of men met in one of the stores one evening. We were discussing Mrs. ————'s plight. Her husband had dropped membership in a lodge at the request of his church. Soon after that he died and left his widow without provision. This caused a discussion among the men assembled in the store, that evening. Mr. H. P. Goertz pulled two dollars out of his pocket and said 'I'll give this to the widow of the one of you who dies first if you will do the same.' Five or six of us agreed. Some others heard of it and likewise contributed until there were about 250 members. This was all unsolicited and unadvertised. We went to some of the ministers of the various churches and asked that each church form an organization of this kind. They felt it would not be wise to do this as a church but promised to join outside the church if one were organized. In about a year an organization was formed and the membership continued to grow.[6]

The principles of this organization are purely on the mutual basis. Each member has one vote and proxy voting and voting by mail is permitted. A board of six directors is elected by the general membership, two each year at the annual meetings. The secretary-treasurer is the only member of the society receiving any remuneration for his work. As evidence of the fact that the society operates entirely for the benefit of its members we note that all of the assessment income goes for the payment of death benefits. The costs of operating the Society are defrayed entirely by the income from invested reserves. The maximum assessment for over forty years has been twelve dollars. The membership totals approximately three thousand, of which all are Mennonites or adherents to Mennonite principles. No lodge members may join.

One of the reasons for the organization of the Mennonite Aid Society was the attempt to provide church members with death benefits equal to those lodges were offering. A number of members joined the lodges against the wishes of their church in order to provide for their families in case of an early death. By doing so they were faced with the alternative of being forced out of church with benefits provided by the lodge or remaining a member of the church and trusting in God and fellow members for provision for wife and family in case of an untimely death. The Mennonite Aid

6. I. I. Bargen, Personal Interview.

Society was organized partly to overcome this dilemma. To many it was a satisfactory answer but some still opposed it on the same grounds that they opposed all insurance. They said that it encouraged speculation and that it indicated a lack of trust in God to provide for all things, including a family bereaved of its wage-earner. Some said women ought to learn to trust in God, and this plan encouraged them to depend on man. The most unkind argument advanced against the systematic aid plan was that a woman might wish for her husband to die or that she might even try to poison him in order to collect the insurance.

Those who advanced the ideas in favor of the Aid Society supported their case with an abundance of Biblical quotations. In the forty-first chapter of Genesis they cited the systematic plan used by Joseph and Pharaoh in Egypt to provide in years of prosperity for years of famine. They likewise quoted Paul in II Corinthians 8:14 where he speaks of equalizing the burdens of one and the prosperity of the other so that later on the course might be reversed. They furthermore advanced arguments based on plain common sense, saying that "In unity there is strength," and that the efforts of the group would lighten the load of the individual. Also that this same principle was already practiced in the insurance of property through the Mennonite Aid Plan. The very soundness of the Plan and the sincerity of its advocates could not fail in due time to win the favor of the majority of the people in the community, and thus in time the Aid Society became established as a permanent organization. This Society has now branched out to communities all over the United States and Canada as well as to the foreign mission fields where many of the Mennonite missionaries carry the protection of the Aid Society. It is purely a mutual aid organization operated only for the benefit of the members, with a maximum benefit of $1,000.00. Mr. I. I. Bargen, who has been the secretary of the organization for many years, says that he enjoys the work immensely and thinks of it as a religious opportunity to do good and to help others in time of need. A paragraph from a specially prepared historical sketch of the organization reveals the general tone and spirit of the Aid Society:

> Jesus teaches, 'To others do what you would have them do to you.' The Mennonite Aid Society stands on that foundation. Its system is

not perfect and in the course of time changes will be needed, but its foundation will be unchanged. That will always be the Golden Rule.[7]

It is this common loyalty to a higher good, or God, which serves as a medicine to prevent the breaking up of mutual aid practices. The unselfish devotion of the officers, who consider their duties as an honorable and almost sacred trust, is in good part responsible for the success of the organization. It should be mentioned that the Mennonites are not the only religious body supporting mutual aid societies. The Lutherans and the Baptists have something similar to the Mennonite plan, but they have until recently confined the benefits to ministers. Their rates are also considerably higher, probably due to the payment of salaries to the officers and provision for different types of insurance benefits. In addition to not paying salaries to its officers, other than the secretary, the Mennonite Aid Society is able to economize because of its dependence on the honesty of its members and potential members. It pays no doctor's examination fees. Every applicant must be endorsed by two Mennonite brethren on whose honesty the Aid Society depends for reliable answers to the questions asked on the application blank. Since the Mennonites do not believe in going to law, but settle disputes out of court, the Society has no legal fees to pay. This mutual trust is a vital factor in the success of mutual aid.

Mountain Lake Preparatory School

Of all the mutual aid activities in Mountain Lake now in existence, the Preparatory School is the oldest. This work was begun by J. J. Balzer in a neighbor's parlor in 1881. For two years this school was held in this private home. It began as a German-English Bible School and continued in this way until 1901, when its curriculum was enlarged and it received academy rating. In that year a two-story frame building was erected. The school grew and attracted many students from Canada and other states. With the increasing restrictions and advancing age limit for public school attendance, the difficulties of the private school increased. The school was co-operatively supported by the five Mennonite churches in the Mountain Lake vicinity. The Board of Directors was elected by the members of the various churches, each having one representative. In addition, each pupil had to pay a small tuition fee. The

7. *Mennonite Aid Society,* "History and Motive," November 1, 1930. (Pamphlet.)

history of the school reveals a series of depressions and periods of prosperity. At the present time there are twenty-four children in the first five grades of the parochial school and an equal number in the academy. The latter is conducted for five months during the late fall and winter, especially for those young men and women who do not care, or may not be able, to attend college but would like to continue studying.

Some of the young people who are unable to obtain work find this a way of spending their time more profitably than spending it in idleness. The primary purpose of the school is to teach both the German language and the Bible, neither one of which, for many of the religiously conservative Mennonites, are satisfactorily taught in public schools if taught at all. In addition to these subjects, there are others such as church history, music, Bible geography, Bible doctrine, personal work, Sunday School teaching, psychology of religion, and ethics.

This activity is a mutual one only in so far as individuals both give and share in its benefits. Before the coming of the public high schools, private academies naturally enjoyed greater patronage and support than they do in the present era. The aims for which the school was founded were typical of hundreds of similar schools throughout the country operated by immigrant groups. The real purpose of these academies was to promote and preserve the culture brought from Europe. Naturally the younger generation no longer feel the need of this as strongly as do the older people and in time the school will have to close for lack of support. At the present time, according to A. Warkentin's WHO'S WHO AMONG THE MENNONITES,[8] there are still thirty-one Bible schools in existence among the Mennonites. Practically all of them are located among the Mennonites who immigrated to the United States and Canada within the last sixty-five years.

Concerning the Bible School in Mountain Lake, the writer found a complete lack of interest among those young people who had been away to college; in some cases the attitude was one of condescension and scorn. Even many of the older people seemed to know very little about the life and the condition and plans of the school, and furthermore, did not display the slightest interest in it. While the

8. Warkentin, *op. cit.*, pp. 177-179.

churches still support the school in addition to the tuition that is paid by the students, the spirit of mutual aid seems rather feeble.

Bethel Deaconess Hospital

The Bethel Deaconess Hospital is another of the Mountain Lake mutual aid activities operated by the Mennonites. Previous to the founding of this hospital there was none within fifty miles of Mountain Lake. For this reason good physicians refused to locate in this town. A number of the town's most public-minded men were willing to invest money to get a hospital as well as a few reputable doctors. It took years to get the hospital started. The plans were discussed for some time before anything definite was done toward securing a hospital. Enthusiasm was revived from time to time and gradually the number who became interested increased. An organization was formed in 1904 on the basis of a stock company with $25.00 shares. Later the amount of the shares was increased to $100.00. The number of shares one person could hold was unlimited. Each share was to have one vote, but no interest was to be paid on the shares. Most people were not interested in their votes. The shares practically amounted to outright gifts.

At the beginning of the organization there was considerable discussion as to whether the hospital should be a Mennonite or a community organization. It was finally voted to make it a Mennonite hospital. The reason for this decision was really to provide a means for the Mennonites to take care of their own poor and sick folks. It also offered a way of providing a place for women within the Church who wanted to volunteer their services as deaconesses. Thus the hospital came to be organized as a deaconess hospital. The community interest in this organization was still not strong and at the time of organization there was a shortage of deaconesses. A still more serious problem was that of getting patients. People were afraid to risk an operation in a hospital so poorly equipped. A solution was finally found and this through a magnificent demonstration of mutual aid. The Mennonite Hospital at Newton, Kansas, was asked to take charge of the Mountain Lake Hospital. The Bethel staff at Newton accepted the invitation to come to help the local institution get started. Not only did they offer their advice, leadership, and some equipment, but they solicited funds and secured them among the Mennonites in and around

Newton. This interest of one community in another's welfare is an expression of the very highest kind of mutual aid. This was a purely philanthropic interest on the part of the Kansas Mennonites. They had nothing whatsoever to gain by this generous gesture, except the personal satisfaction that comes with doing good. With the help of funds, equipment, advice, and nurses from the Kansas Mennonites, the local hospital began to attract doctors to the community and patients were willing to come to the hospital. At the time, the hospital was only a frame building which had formerly been the village school house. A deaconess training school was organized and continued until 1930. In 1921 a modern twenty-room hospital building was erected and fully equipped with the most up-to-date medical instruments and hospital furnishings.

The hospital in time became self-supporting so that the aid and supervision of the Kansas hospital staff was no longer required. At the present time the local churches and the community support it, although the management of it is strictly in the hands of the Mennonites. One of the ways of raising money for the support of the hospital is through an annual Hospital Day. This has been made a special community event. Each year an all-day program is planned. Outside speakers of note are enlisted, usually community singing is engaged in by choruses that have been rehearsing for weeks previously. In addition a public lunch is served. Offerings are taken during the day. Another day is Gift Day, when all people in the community are asked to bring their gifts in cash and kind, such as canned goods, bed clothing, and money. It is through such mutual support by the community that the hospital is enabled to enjoy freedom from debt. It is impossible to cite a better example of voluntary mutual aid in support of a community enterprise. The five trained nurses and the twelve attendants have a newly built private home of their own adjoining the hospital. The nurses are paid fixed salaries and are no longer volunteers working as deaconesses. A strong religious spirit still motivates the nurses in their humanitarian work. They conduct their own religious exercises every morning in the dining hall. This consists of reading Scripture verses, singing German hymns and prayer. In the evening after dinner services are held again, but this time in English. The nurses seem less motivated by professional aims than by a desire to relieve human suffering and minister to the sick and afflicted.

Old Folks' Home

The Mennonites in the Mountain Lake region are true to the Mennonite principles found in every Mennonite settlement, i. e., taking care of their own aged, poor and orphaned. When the new hospital was built in 1921, the old building was converted into residences for an old folks' home. In this way it was convenient for medical aid to be provided for those in need without inconvenience either to the aged or to the hospital staff. The two buildings are located side by side with a passageway between them. The home for the old folks and the hospital are under the same management. The home has room for sixteen people and it is always full. Before the home was established, provision was made for the dependents among the Mennonites through private homes of friends or relatives. The present method of providing for them is more satisfactory to all parties concerned. The comfort of the guests in the home can be better provided because of uniform heating; a common dining table makes it possible for all meals to be prepared by one dietitian, medical care is conveniently close at hand, both privacy and sociability are possible and relatives are relieved from extra work required to care for their old folks in the private home. This method of community support for the poor and the aged is a tribute to the practice of mutual aid. Orphaned children are generally provided for by relatives or friends.

Mutual Aid Societies Not Strictly Mennonite

The Farmers Co-operative Elevator Company.—This farmers' company was organized largely through the personal initiative of a single individual, Herman J. Fast. He was unable to get a fair price for one hundred bushels of timothy seed that he had to sell. Upon careful investigation of the reason, he discovered that the four elevator operators at that time had a secret agreement among themselves to fix the price of all seed and grain. They had, in fact, eliminated competition between themselves. Mr. Fast called a general meeting of all farmers in the community and explained the situation to them. He proposed that they each subscribe for ten-dollar shares and raise enough cash among themselves to build their own elevator. There was great enthusiasm at the first meeting, but it subsequently waned when the time came to put in the money. After repeated attempts to get enough farmers interested to organize

and to subscribe a sufficient sum of money, Mr. Fast succeeded in getting together about three thousand dollars. One of the existing elevators was purchased for $3,500.00. An experienced manager was retained and the farmers launched their own business enterprise.

At an early meeting of the members an organization was effected and a constitution drawn up. The organization was conducted democratically from the beginning. A board of nine directors was elected from the general membership. Voting membership was open to any producer of farm products. Anyone might buy ten-dollar shares up to a maximum of four hundred dollars. There was to be a definite limit on the amount of debt the company could contract. Profits were to be distributed to the members in proportion to the amount of their patronage. The purpose of the organization was to provide the farmers in the Mountain Lake region with a reliable agency through which to market their grain and secure their coal, feed, farm machinery and twine. They felt that through a mutual organization of their own they would be able to do this more satisfactorily and less expensively than they had previously been paying a private agency to do it for them. The organization was incorporated under the regulations of a state charter in 1915. This was done in order to avoid paying income taxes as a profit-making concern. The company was organized in 1901 and has been exceedingly successful for thirty-seven years. For thirty-five out of the thirty-seven years patronage dividends were paid regularly. Interest has also been paid regularly, sometimes as high as six per cent on the capital invested. Mr. Fast, for thirty-seven years the president, explains the success of the Co-operative Elevator in the following words:

> During all the years as president of this organization there has never been a misunderstanding between members of the board of directors or between the board and its managers. I attribute this lack of trouble to a policy of complete honesty. When I was offered chances for bribes and commissions, I refused them, saying that I would enter no agreement without first discussing it fully with the board of directors. They used to say: 'Oh, Mr. Fast, this is just a little thing.' I said: 'It is not the way we do business.' We always agreed to shake hands at every board meeting to manifest a Christian spirit toward each other.[9]

In these words from the founder and the life-long president, one

9. Herman J. Fast, personal interview. An examination of the secretary's minutes corroborates this attitude.

is able to discern a strong moral and religious tone. It is evident that Mr. Fast felt a keen sense of responsibility to his fellow members who trusted him with the honored position of head of their mutual organization. The fact that a business concern can operate for four decades as a mutual organization without a single misunderstanding of serious nature is also evidence that a rather generous spirit manifested itself both in the administration and among the membership of this organization. The religious note, so evident in this purely commercial organization, may be in part accounted for by the fact that eight of the original nine board members were also members of the Mennonite Church. The significance of this fact is that Mennonites, as a rule, are supposed to practice their Christian beliefs in everyday activities.

A further evidence of the religious tone pervading this organization is found in the record of the meetings held by its board of directors. Except for the subject matter discussed at the meetings, one would not be able to tell it from some official church board meeting. In a short sketch at the end of twenty-five years of continuous operation, the president speaks to his fellow-members in this fashion:

> I hope you will agree with me today we cannot but say thanks to God, whose blessings and presence rested on our company in preventing accidental loss of life and property and in granting His guidance in business so as not to experience destructive losses . . . . I stand before you, dear members of the company, thanking you for the patience toward me and thanking God for His mercy upon me and also upon my board members.[10]

It is not to be assumed that the success of the company is due to any religious attitudes expressed, nor to the fact that it was a mutual aid organization, nor to the fact that it was operated by farmers, nor even because of some exceptional ability of a single individual. It was perhaps not one single factor, but a combination of factors. Mr. Fast stated that he believed one of the main reasons for the success of the enterprise, in addition to observing a policy of honesty, was the refusal to join any national organization of farmers' elevators. He felt that, by joining a larger regional or national organization, the local company would sacrifice some of its freedom to act according to the needs of the local association. He felt

10. Secretarial Notes of the Farmers' Co-operative Elevator Co., Mountain Lake, Minnesota, June 12, 1936. (Unpublished record.)

that "other elevators joined and failed, while we didn't join and didn't fail." By joining a larger association the tendency, he felt, would be "to listen to advice from those above and no longer work out your own problems in the local organization for yourself."

Although the Farmers' Co-operative Elevator does not limit its membership to members of the Mennonite Church, it is operated purely on a mutual aid basis. The aim of the organization is to make profit for its members in an ethical way. The religious attitude of its administration is unusual for a profit-making organization. Co-operative elevators are very numerous throughout the State of Minnesota.

Farmers' Co-operative Creamery Association. Behind every organization is a single individual who is more directly responsible for its creation than any other person. This character in the case of the Co-operative Creamery in Mountain Lake was Abraham Hiebert. His life is very interesting and the part that he played in making Mountain Lake people co-operative minded cannot be overestimated. A life-long friend of Hiebert's described him thus:

> Abraham Hiebert was really interested in co-operation to the extent that he repeatedly devoted his time, his money, and his family to the cause of co-operation. He was a very social man. He had formerly been a minister in the Mennonite Church, but he could not adjust himself to any one church. His wife was a very economical and hard-working woman. He was one of the most liked men I ever knew. He always had his head full of co-operative schemes. Threshing rings, road building gangs, and he even tried to make a creamery co-operative by interesting farmers in subscribing money to it. He couldn't succeed in that way so he bought it with his own money, and then tried it again, but was not successful. Soon after he bought it his creamery burned to the ground. He was a fine, unbigoted man. He did not believe in faith alone, but in works too. He often quoted from the book of James in support of his theory. He said: 'Prayer is all right but one must work and answer his own prayer. One can't expect to pray and then hope to have his prayer mysteriously answered.'[11]

This descriptive quotation of a single individual has been given at length in order to show the type of influence such a person could have on others in the community and through them be responsible for the strong feeling for activities on a mutual aid or co-operative basis. The Farmers' Creamery is a good illustration of this point.

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11. I. I. Bargen, Personal interview. Mr. Bargen is now eighty years old. He was for thirty-two years postmaster of Mountain Lake and taught school for more than twenty-five years.

Several years after Hiebert attempted a co-operative organization of the creamery he left the community to undertake a co-operative colonial experiment in Wisconsin. In 1908 a number of farmers organized a co-operative creamery on the very basis which Mr. Hiebert had several years earlier worked so hard to establish. The organization is financially very successful today. It is operating under state regulations according to the charter granted to co-operative creameries throughout the state. Ninety-five per cent of the shareholders must be producers of dairy products and at least fifty-one per cent of the patrons must be shareholders. This distinguishes it as predominantly a farmers' organization.

The local creamery is a member of the Land o' Lakes Creameries, which is a co-operative wholesaling agency. The Manager of the Mountain Lake Creamery said that he knew of only one privately owned creamery in all the surrounding towns. He stated that almost every town has its co-operative creamery. The creamery, says the manager, is a purely co-operative, profit-making venture. There are no religious exercises of any kind at any of the business meetings. Mr. Kliewer has been manager of this creamery for almost seven years and was employed for four years before becoming manager. If he were to own the plant, he says he would not manage it differently from the way in which he is managing it now. He thinks that the co-operative plan of doing business is a very good way for the farmers to help themselves; without it they could not get a good price for their products.[12]

At the present time all of the members of the Board of Directors are Mennonites. Most of them are members of other co-operative business enterprises. One of the unusual features of this co-operative organization is its civic-mindedness. It has just recently constructed a two-story building and equipped it at a cost of $50,000.00. The second story is used entirely for civic and social purposes. A small auditorium with seating capacity for about three hundred occupies most of the floor. A small stage has been built in it for dramatic productions. The room is rented to a number of town clubs for their periodic meetings. One room is used as a town public library. This activity is supported by a progressive minded woman's club in Mountain Lake. These arrangements for civic activities in

12. Henry J. Kliewer, Manager of the Creamery, personal interview, March 28, 1938.

a purely commercial organization are very unusual for a small town.

Let us further notice several less significant commercial organizations using the mutual aid principle.

The Mountain Lake Shipping Association.—This organization was formed in 1920 largely through the initiative of John Quiring. The immediate cause for the organization was the low prices which local farmers were getting for their cattle. It had been the practice of private cattle dealers to pay higher prices for stock at a distance from Mountain Lake than they paid the nearby farmers. The reason for this was the keener competition in outlying regions. There was usually only one buyer in the local area. Jacob Bargen had been the buyer for many years, and he was well liked and trusted as a man of honesty and justice. When he died other less scrupulous buyers entered the business and because of this the farmers, under the leadership of John Quiring, organized their own stock shipping association. One dollar was collected from each of the twenty-five or thirty men at the first meeting for the purpose of creating a fund with which to begin operations.

The organization did not need much capital to operate. One of the men acted as agent for the farmers. Any farmer who had cattle to ship would call the appointed agent and tell him how many cattle he wished to ship. The agent told him when the shipment would be made and how many cattle were needed to make a carload. As soon as one or more carloads were ready in the local yards, a stock car was backed in, loaded and shipped to St. Paul. The farmers did not know how much their cattle would bring until they received their checks, but they were sure that practically every cent of the selling price above freight cost was theirs. The government weight inspectors insured honest weight at the stockyards.

In order to insure themselves against agreements of large buyers in St. Paul to keep down the prices of cattle and hogs, a number of local shipping associations, similar to the co-operative at Mountain Lake, organized a central co-operative marketing association in St. Paul. Each farmer invested fifteen dollars in a share (now worth one hundred dollars). Profits were returned to the local association in proportion to their shipments and to each individual member in proportion to his patronage. This association lasted for thirteen years. At one time were two co-operative shipping associations due to friction between the two local banks, each of

which wanted the funds deposited in its bank. Later the two organizations united. In 1933 the shipping association decided to stop active operation, since the trucking business was competing successfully with the railroads. Farmers would haul their own cattle directly to the stockyards without the help of the shipping association. At the present time the organization has a fund of $1,600.00 in the treasury and the members are considering ways of disbursing the fund. Some farmers want to use the money to buy their own truck and continue shipping; others favor dividing the money among other co-operative enterprises such as the local creamery, the hospital, oil association and the proposed co-operative cold storage association.

This organization had as its aim a means of making profit for its members. Its policies and principles were in line with democratic ideals. It is another demonstration of the achievements possible through mutual efforts. It is furthermore a demonstration of economic success that does not cultivate selfishness of the individual above that of the group. It is in line with the Christian theory that all in the group should work together for the good of the group. It is interesting to notice that two members of the Board of Directors in this association were also directors on another co-operative association board. Three of the five directors are Mennonites. There is no direct mention of religion in any of the organization's activities.

The Co-operative Oil Association of Mountain Lake.—This is the latest economic venture on the mutual aid basis in Mountain Lake. The story of the organization's growth and aims is perhaps best told in the words of the present manager:

> A number of farmers got together and talked over the matter of buying their oil co-operatively. They felt that they ought to have an organization of their own. The present co-operative started in 1933. We have a co-operative creamery and a co-operative elevator and they were showing a nice dividend, so we started in in the oil business. Oscar Piper is the one individual who is largely responsible for the beginning of the organization. He worked hard to get reliable and successful farmers to push the co-operative. Shares were sold at $10.00 each. We raised $900.00 and the Midland Wholesale Co-op helped us with four dollars and fifty cents to every dollar we raised. Any co-operative that is managed right is bound to make money. It is run on wholesale plus expenses. Most of the co-operatives that fail are careless about the type of directors they elect. We have about five hundred customers and about two hundred members; three trucks and four employees.

One of our men was with the Standard Oil Company for seventeen years; he quit to take a job with the co-op because he believes in its principles. We get about seventy-five per cent of the town's business, which is very unusual. This is a very co-operatively minded community. St. James and other towns have started co-ops and failed. We have never done any soliciting. We give a little credit, thirty days as the general rule. Many farmers have been in the habit of paying bills once a year. We are trying to break them of this habit gradually. We serve sixteen of the twenty-three oil burners in town. Competitors at first met us with discounts; we met them with an equal price. They are now getting afraid of us.[13]

The Co-operative is organized according to state regulations for all co-operative organizations. It is primarily a farmers' organization although many of the town business men are shareholders. All shareholders draw interest in their investment but only farmers who are members can vote. Six of the seven directors are members of the Mennonite Church. It is interesting to note that the individual having most to do with the starting of this co-operative activity is not a Mennonite. A number of the directors of this Association are likewise members of other co-operative organization boards of directors. As can be noted from the words of the manager quoted above, the desire for profits seems to have been the one large factor in starting this organization. In the first year business worth thirteen thousand dollars was transacted; in the second year twenty-three thousand; in the third year thirty-one thousand; and in 1936, the fourth year of operation, the business transactions had amounted to a total of forty-five thousand. From what has been said about this organization as to the purpose of its founding, its development and its present success, the question can be fairly raised as to what is the primary interest in this organization. Is it the ethical method that a co-operative organization employs in doing business that is of primary interest to officers and members, or is it the profits that this ethical method produces? It is not our intention to discuss this question here. Our chief concern is to point out that this oil association is another mutual aid activity in the particular community we are observing. The organization is not limited to Mennonites and its aims are not similar to those of the organizations previously discussed in this chapter under the heading of "Mutual aid societies which are strictly Mennonite."

13. Peter Eitzen, Manager of the Co-operative Oil Association, personal interview, March 24, 1938.

Mountain Lake Co-operative Cold Storage Association.—We have discussed organizations that have been over fifty years in continuous operation; we have observed others that have been organized within the last twenty years and still others within the last five years. It is possible to include in our study one that is in the process of formation. The cold storage plan is a project relatively new and has been made possible only through the cheap production of electricity within recent years. In brief the plan has been described to the writer by one of the local business men who is an enthusiastic supporter of the idea. He explained it thus:

> The co-operative cold storage idea is to get our own meat killed by a local man, have it cut into different pieces such as sirloin, rump, ham, beefsteak, etc. It then is to be given a quick freeze, wrapped in paper and put in cold storage. Each man has a locker which is electrically cold the year round. He can go to his locker for meat whenever he needs it. The shares are ten dollars each and the rental for a year would be about the same. This could be done with berries and vegetables as well as with meat. The meat we get in our small town is not first-grade. There are five grades of meat, says the man from the meat department of the University of Minnesota. We get about third or fourth grade; all our meat is shipped in.[14]

In this attempt to organize a purely non-profit association there is no intimation of any religious motives as there was in the Mutual Aid Society, the hospital, and other societies previously mentioned. While there are no religious arguments advanced in favor of it, there are also none advanced against it. It seems to be purely a secular activity. The mutual aid principle is used as a means of raising the necessary capital to undertake the project. An estimate of the reaction of some of the business men in town to this proposed plan can be made from the further remarks of Mr. Frank Balzer who says:

> Considerable opposition has arisen from the business men. They think there is too much co-operation in town already. Most of the business men are afraid of the word 'co-operation.' They think business of that kind ought to be left to independent interests. They say: 'We have all of these co-operatives and the next thing will be a co-operative store and that will be the deterioration of the town.' The weakness of a co-operative is that the directors don't understand the

14. Frank Balzer, personal interview, March 23, 1938. Balzer is president of the local school board, owner of a lumber company, and a graduate of Carleton College. His parents are Mennonites. He does not belong anywhere nor attend any church but listens to University of Chicago Round Table Discussions.

business and they, furthermore, are not willing to pay a good manager the salary he should get.[15]

It is significant to note that this little town is co-operatively minded enough to be one of the early communities to introduce the co-operative meat locker system. In 1935 there were only two such lockers in the State of Minnesota, in 1936 there were seven, in 1937 there were sixty and it is estimated that by 1940 there will be from two to three hundred such plants.[16] Of importance to us is the argument advanced for and against such a community mutual aid project. Of the numerous aid activities we have studied in this article, this is the first time it has been possible for us to see such an organization in the process of formation. It is not unlikely that reactions to previously organized mutual aid activities were of a similar nature. It was the observation of the writer that a number of men who were interested in other mutual aid activities were opposed to this particular one.

In addition to the numerous mutual enterprises that have already been mentioned there is still another that is not organized on a religious, economic or social basis, but on a community basis. It is the municipal light and water plant. Until very recent years, this public utility was supplied by a privately owned power line from outside the community. Many of the citizens felt that their water and electric rates were higher than necessary. They sent complaints to the operators but to no avail; they next tried group action through the town council but in neither case were they able to get the rates reduced to what they thought was fair. Those who had already experienced difficulty in other lines in having private interests pay primary attention to public welfare, decided that the only permanent solution to the problem was to build a municipal light and power plant of their own.

When this feeling pervaded the town and definite action was taken in this direction, the public utility interests owning the main lines finally offered very attractive rates. It then became a matter of choice whether to continue with the municipal plan or to continue patronage of the privately owned lines. After considerable discussion a vote was taken and the decision rested in favor of constructing a municipal plant. At the present time the plant is in full oper-

15. Frank Balzer, personal interview, March 23, 1938.
16. *The Co-operative Builder,* Superior, Wisconsin, April 23, 1938.

ation and there is a general feeling of satisfaction among the citizens.

It is of interest in connection with this study to raise the question as to the source of this unusually high interest in mutual aid activities of one sort or another. Minnesota is nationally known as a progressive state. As has been said, there are more co-operative organizations in Minnesota than in any other single state. Is this interest in co-operation in Mountain Lake due to the general cultural influence of the region? Is it due to a religious desire to carry on daily activities in a Christian brotherly way, the source of which came originally from teachings of the Mennonite Church through the mutual aid societies? Or is it simply a natural development growing out of the economic and social conditions of the times? With the limited information at our disposal, there is no sound method for answering this question. It is sufficient in this study to explore the general nature of what actually has been done, and is still being done, in a specific Mennonite community. Any community with approximately three thousand population, either of a homogenous or heterogenous character, that is able to build up a list of a dozen or more mutual aid organizations that are financially, socially, and ethically successful, is worthy of careful social investigation.

Conclusion

From the study of mutual aid as made in this thesis, a number of facts seem to stand out rather clearly. In the first place, the spirit of mutual aid seems to be rooted in the nature of the most primitive man. From the earliest ascertainable records, man has lived in groups and extended mutual help and risked life and property for the sake of his fellow man. Man seems always to have realized that there are advantages such as leadership, power, and defense, derived from living and striving together. He has always combined voluntarily to meet the difficult and the strange. Through mutual efforts he has not only attained group ends but he has obtained his own aims as well. Joint participation in an activity may increase benefits accruing to each one concerned.

Mutual aid among the Mennonites is a specific illustration of the above generalizations. The Mennonites as a primary group have developed a feeling of obligation which tends to accompany the

realization that there is mutual advantage in common association and united efforts. The spirit of mutual aid displayed in the family has, in many cases among the Mennonites, been extended beyond the family to the entire religious brotherhood. It is further to be noticed that mutual aid has generally been recognized as being practiced in informal, unorganized form. Among the Mennonites there are still many forms of organized and unorganized forms of mutual aid. It is also significant to notice that mutual aid has expressed itself more generally among the Mennonites in organized form to provide protection against natural elements—those which are beyond the control of man such as fire, storm, sickness, poverty, and death. Organized mutual aid in Mennonite communities has not often concerned itself with profit-making activities. Its purpose has generally been to share losses or promote public welfare or share responsibility in common problems. In one specific community it was observed that there is a distinction between those organizations which are strictly confined to Mennonites and those which are open to any one. The Mennonite organizations are pervaded with a religious atmosphere whereas the non-Mennonite associations, as a general rule, make no mention of religion. In the case of the mutual aid organizations of Mountain Lake, in the Mennonite organizations that are religiously motivated, the purpose of the organization is not to make profit; in the organizations not strictly Mennonite the motive seems to be definitely to make profit. A question to be raised here is to what extent the strictly Mennonite and religiously motivated aid societies have influenced the open membership, economically motivated aid societies? It is also proper to raise the question as to how far mutual aid activities are stimulated by the culture of the general region in which Mountain Lake is located. Finally, mutual aid societies are not a definite part of the regular church activity. They have no place in the Mennonite literature, nor in the programs of the various church conferences. They are organizations that have originated and developed parallel with the Church or, if in unorganized form, as a result of the teaching of the Church concerning Christian brotherhood.

RESEARCH NOTES

MENNO SIMONS' TRUE POSITION ON "AVOIDANCE"

In the last years of Menno Simons' life difficulties arose within the brotherhood in Holland and North Germany regarding church discipline. There was indeed not a dissenting voice concerning the absolute need of strict discipline, but there were differences of opinion on the question of the avoidance of the excommunicated. In a few sections of Holland there was sharp controversy on this point. Menno Simons repeatedly gave expression in his writings to the fear of a possible disruption in the Church in Holland. This anxiety proved groundless. The first actual schism in the Mennonite Church was the Flemish and Friesian division which took place a few years after Menno Simons' death. This division was not caused by differences of opinion regarding church discipline. The withdrawal of the Waterlandian Mennonites, in 1555, could not be considered a church division.

In a later period there was a controversy regarding Menno Simons' attitude on the question of avoidance. The assertion has been made by a certain writer who did not approve of avoidance that only in the last decades of his labors did Menno teach this practice. He held that this supposed change in Menno's views is to be ascribed to the influence of Leonard Bouwens. Clearly this view is contrary to fact. Menno Simons taught avoidance in his early writings. In his *Loving Admonitions,* 1541, he insisted that the excommunicated are to be shunned, "whether it be father or mother, sister or brother, husband or wife, son or daughter, without any respect of persons," and that such avoidance is to be observed "with prayer, tears, and a compassionate spirit, out of great love"; its purpose is, he says, to bring the erring to repentance.[1] Similar statements are found in various other passages of his writings.

While Menno Simons obviously from the beginning held this view, he nevertheless always counselled an attitude of leniency on the question of avoidance between husband and wife (marital avoidance). So far from becoming more stringent on this point, toward the last decade of his life (in 1550), he placed himself on record as disapproving any attempt to enforce marital avoidance in case the persons directly concerned were not convinced that it should be observed.[2] In 1554, and again in 1558, he repeated the same sentiments on avoidance.[3]

Menno Simons' attitude on the point under consideration is made clear by a concrete example. In the Mennonite congregation of the city of Emden a sister named Swaen Rutgers objected to avoiding her excommunicated husband. There were those who advised setting a time within which she must decide upon avoiding him, or lose her right to membership. Menno

1. *Menno Simons' Complete Works,* Elkhart, Indiana, 1871, Part II, p. 445. Hereafter cited as *Works.*

2. *Works,* Part II, p. 277b.

3. *Works,* Part I, p. 284; Part I, p. 250.

Simons, in a letter written regarding this case to the congregation at Emden, said that when he was informed of this threat, his heart was filled with grief. He warned the church at Emden of the evil reports which such a procedure would cause concerning the church and the word of the Lord. "We have never dared to follow such a practice," he wrote. "I shall never consent to such a course." Swaen Rutgers was not excommunicated. In a letter written in 1558 Menno defended the same views.[4]

Relative to Menno Simons' attitude on this point strange stories were circulated in a controversy carried on in the first half of the seventeenth century. It was asserted that the bishop Leonard Bouwens insisted on the most rigid practice of marital avoidance, and that by a threat of excommunication he compelled Menno to concur. The claim was made that Menno was thoroughly frightened by this threat, and that he consequently yielded to Bouwens' demands. Clearly this is an impossible story. Hans Alenson, who relates this story, had heard it from a certain Apollonia Ottes who in turn was told this story by an unnamed person. The latter anonymous person added that Menno Simons, by yielding against better knowledge to Leonard Bouwens, "became a servant of men." The same anonymous person is authority for another unbelievable story concerning Menno as a servant of men. He related that Menno Simons in his last illness confessed that he had become a servant of men by submitting to Bouwens' demands for strict marital avoidance. Without question these stories are inventions. The person who invented them and related them to others was evidently not aware of the fact that Menno Simons had always taught marital avoidance and yet had disapproved of excommunicating those who hesitated to observe it.

The two last books of Menno Simons treat on excommunication and the question of avoidance. One of them is his *Thorough Instruction on Excommunication.* Before writing this book he was visited at Wüstenfelde by two Mennonite ministers from the Rhineland, Sielis and Lemke, who had come to confer with him on this point in the hope of bringing about a union. They were of the Swiss Brethren and differed from Menno on the question of avoidance. Among the Mennonites of the lower countries (the Netherlands and North Germany), the Swiss Brethren were named "Upperlandians," since most of them lived in the upper, or mountainous, sections of South Germany and Switzerland. A marginal note in the Dutch edition of Menno Simons' Works, of 1681, (p. 489) says: "The Upperlandians are known in the upper countries and Moravia as Swiss Brethren."

Sielis and Lemke, on their visit at Wüstenfelde, were received by Menno Simons as brethren, as stated specifically by him. For two days they conferred with him on the point in question. Menno Simons did not make the suggestion that the two brethren approve of a rigid rule on this point; he hoped to persuade them that the practice of the Brethren of the lower countries was not unacceptable. For a time it seemed that the desired adjustment was in sight. After the departure of Sielis and Lemke the discussion was continued in writing. Menno received a letter from the Upperlandians and then wrote in reply his above named book *Thorough Instruction on Excommunication.*[5]

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4. The letter was printed in the *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen,* 1894, Leiden.
5. *Works,* Part I, pp. 230-268.

When Sielis and Lemke had read this book they made an almost unbelievable mistake, indicating that they were incompetent for the evidently self-chosen task of bringing about a union between the Netherlandians and Upperlandians, and that they were unworthy of the confidence which Menno had placed in them. They decided to appeal direct to the congregations of the lower countries to accept the Upperlandian view, contrary to Menno Simons' advice. Apparently they made another trip to the lower countries, as seems to be indicated by statements made by Menno. Then they wrote to the brotherhood in those countries, bringing personal charges against Menno Simons. The contents of their letter are in part cited in the last book of Menno, directly to be mentioned. Menno was not fitted for a leader, they urged; he was a fickle man and contradicted himself in his writings. Formerly he had held that three admonitions must precede every exclusion, but of late he had discarded this view. They advanced various slanderous accusations against him. They stated that Menno himself had said regretfully in their hearing that too much was made of the word or opinion of Menno Simons.[6] Was it not apparent then that it were better if his word counted for less?

Naturally Menno Simons was grieved over these developments. He wrote *A Thorough Reply to the Slander, Defamation, Backbiting, Unseasoned and Bitter Words of Sielis and Lemke,* the last book from his pen.[7] He rebuked them in no uncertain tone, but withal endeavored to show a Christian spirit of love, addressing them as "most beloved," "ye dear chosen men."

The often repeated opinion that Menno Simons in this book declared the Upperlandians to be excommunicated is clearly incorrect. The citation from his Reply,[8] given in the article on Menno Simons in the *Mennonitische Lexikon* is not to the point. The Reply is not addressed to the Upperlandians but to Sielis and Lemke personally. Menno tells them that he and the pious who were with him could recognize them as their brethren only if they take another attitude and make amendments for the wrongs they committed. The book contains clear evidence that this admonition is not directed against the Upperlandians.

Scottdale, Pa. John Horsch.

6. *Works,* Part II, p. 292a.
7. *Works,* Part II, pp. 283-295.
8. *Works,* Part II, p. 295.

BOOK REVIEWS

Descendants of Barbara Hochstedler and Christian Stutzman. Rev. Harvey Hostetler, D.D. Historical Introduction by William F. Hochstetler. 1938. Pp. 1391. Mennonite Publishing House, Scottdale, Pa. $3.00.

This volume supplements the earlier one by the same author, *Descendants of Jacob Hochstetler,* published in 1912 at Elgin, Illinois, and now out of print. The Barbara Hochstetler of the new volume was the daughter of the Jacob of the first one. At the time the latter was published the compiler knew of the daughter, but her descendants had not then been traced. This volume therefore completes the genealogical record of the immigrant Jacob Hochstetler.

Jacob was a man of the Amish faith who migrated either from Switzerland or the Palatinate to Pennsylvania in 1736. The Historical Introduction, which was originally prepared for the first volume and is here reprinted in part, surveys what is known of the European background of the family ancestor, and describes his life as a pioneer in Berks County, Pennsylvania. A considerable part of the introduction is given to the account of the attack made upon the family home in 1757 by a band of hostile Indians. Some members of the family were massacred, the father and two sons were taken into captivity from which they were able to escape some years later.

A prodigious amount of painstaking work has gone into the compilation of this book, as also of the previous one. The latter included 9,000 families of descendants of the immigrant Jacob through his three sons. The present volume includes 15,550 family units descended through the daughter Barbara. The regular pattern for each family's description includes the following data: The descendant's own date and place of birth, date and place of death (if deceased), date and place of marriage, the marriage partner with the same data, and also the parents of the partner with their place of residence. Then follow data on church affiliation, occupation, and children with dates of their birth. Naturally for so many thousands of families scattered over the continent the data could not be obtained with one hundred per cent completeness in all cases. Still the total amount of factual information contained in the book is little short of astounding. As is to be expected, it was hardly humanly possible to avoid all errors and inaccuracies in the printing of such a mass of facts, though the evident number of these is not large.

This volume, of course, is interesting to those direct descendants who are curious about their family history. It will have real value also for students, historians, and genealogists in general. This Hochstetler family, as the two books show, has been an integral part of the history of the Amish branch of the Mennonites in America. It is said that the first Amish congregation organized in America was in the community where this ancestor lived. Today, as one can see from examining the indices to the books, the descendants of this Hochstetler are to be found in numbers in practically every Amish settlement in the United States from Mifflin County, Pennsylvania, westward, excepting certain settlements made by nineteenth century immigrants from Europe.

The course of the westward migrations of the Amish can be readily traced in this book. The influence of their religious principles and practices is reflected here. Their practice of living in compact communities as a rule and forbidding marriage with outsiders has led to a great deal of intermarriage among them. For example, in about 30 per cent of all families recorded in this book descendants of the immigrant ancestor have married each other, a fact which is handily indicated in each case. In some families as many as four and five lines of descent run together today. The rarity of divorce is also conspicuous. These and other points will interest the sociologist and the eugenist. The church historian may hope to discover from such a book some factors that have taken numbers of the descendants from Amish pioneers into other Christian denominations. The influence which the American frontier and the westward movement of population in the last century had in scattering some individuals and isolating them from the religious life of the Amish communities is evident from a sampling of the pages of the book. Numerous other facts and impressions, both curious and useful, may be gleaned from a perusal of its closely packed pages.

The value of the volume is enhanced by the exhaustive indices at the end. There is an index of all the family heads, arranged alphabetically by their surnames, with their marriage partners; the second index is of the family heads arranged by states and postoffices; the third gives the ancestors of marriage partners as mentioned in the text and footnotes of the book, a feature useful to all genealogists and compilers of family records.

Scottdale, Pennsylvania. Edward Yoder.

Nonresistance Under Test. By E. J. Swalm. Published by E. V. Publishing House, Nappanee, Indiana. 1938. 55 pages.

This brief brochure is a lecture in which the author relates his own experiences as a conscientious objector during the World War. He is a bishop in the church group known as the Brethren in Christ, a small evangelical body that holds to New Testament nonresistance along with Mennonites and some others. Bishop Swalm, then a young man, was drafted in Ontario into the Canadian army, and in the course of ten weeks time in the summer of 1918 saw life in a military canteen, was court-martialed for refusing military uniform and all forms of service in the army, and was imprisoned at St. Catharine's, Ontario. After a short time in prison exemption was secured for him and he was released. The Mennonites in Canada have constitutional exemption from military service. The Brethren in Christ, being a smaller group and more recent in origin, had not at the time clearly established the same immunity, which may account for this objector's experiences with the draft.

The story of the author's experiences is very vividly told. There is a deeply religious attitude evident throughout the story. The living faith in God, the firm conviction on the sinfulness of war and all that goes with it, and the readiness to suffer for that faith and conviction make the story a thrilling one. To some the pathetic and subjective tone in the narrative may seem to be overdone, but there is no mistaking the absolute sincerity of the faith and the conviction that led to the experiences related. Many readers will be unfavorably impressed by the stylistic mannerism of the author in using the so-called editorial "we" throughout, presumably out of a modest

wish to avoid the first person singular pronoun. Even in the spoken message "we" sounds slightly stilted in such a narrative, and in written narrative doubly so, practically defeating the purpose of the author to be modest and inconspicuous. The booklet is nevertheless inspiring and profitable reading for all, especially for young persons. It is a welcome addition to the meager amount of published records from those who were conscientious objectors during the World War.

Scottdale, Pennsylvania. Edward Yoder.

Menno Simons' Life and Writings. A Quadri-centennial Tribute. 1536-1936. Biography by HAROLD S. BENDER. Writings Selected and Translated from the Dutch by JOHN HORSCH. Mennonite Publishing House, Scottdale, Pennsylvania, 1936. Cloth, $ .60; Paper, $ .35.

Menno Simons, Apostle of the Nonresistant Life. By C. HENRY SMITH, PH. D. Mennonite Book Concern, Berne, Indiana. [1936]. $ .75.

Prior to 1916 there was no good English biography of the eponymous leader of the Mennonite Church. It is true that J. Newton Brown's, *The Life and Times of Menno, the Celebrated Dutch Reformer,* had appeared at Philadelphia in 1853. But the book was inadequate and of no great significance. In 1916 John Horsch, the noted Mennonite historian of Scottdale, Pennsylvania, published the standard English biography, *Menno Simons, His Life, Labors, and Teachings.* The year 1936, the quadricentennial of Menno's conversion to Obbenite Anabaptism, found the Horsch biography out of print. In that year the publishing houses of both the (Old) Mennonites and the General Conference of Mennonites of North America issued brief biographies of Menno (1496-1561).

The Bender biography of 50 pages is a well-organized and well-written sketch. In the first chapter Menno's early years at Witmarsum and his training in a Frisian monastery are described. The author traces carefully the steps in the thinking of the conscientious priest from his ordination in March, 1524, until his conversion eleven years later. Chapter II is devoted to a study of his conversion and the renunciation of Catholicism in January, 1536. Then follow three chapters on his labors in Holland, 1536-43; in Northwest Germany, 1543-46; and in Holstein, 1546-61. Dr. Bender closes his discussion with a good chapter on the significance of Menno Simons.

The second half of this Scottdale volume consists of some fifty pages of select quotations from Menno's own writings, covering a range of several dozen topics of doctrine, as well as ethical instructions. The translator presents a brief section on every major point of Menno's doctrine and practise on which he could find a suitable selection. Menno's extant writings contain no treatises on feet-washing or the holy kiss (*Menno Simons, His Life, Labors, and Teachings,* 1916, p. 272).

Dr. Smith's biography is not divided into numbered chapters and is not so well organized, but is written in his usual attractive style. After treating Menno's early life, the author cuts back and discusses the origin and fundamental doctrines of Swiss Anabaptism and its spread to the Netherlands. He then takes up the life of Menno again and traces it to its close. The final section of the 75-page book deals with the Mennonites of today, being a brief survey of both the Old and New World followers of Menno.

Goshen College. John C. Wenger.

The First Hundred Years. A History of the Mennonite Church in Adams County, Indiana. 1838-1938. Eva F. Sprunger. Berne, Indiana, September, 1938.

The First Hundred Years is a well-written history of a group of Swiss Mennonites who migrated a century ago. In 1849 the group consisted of but sixteen families. Later immigration, coupled with the fact that pioneers generally have large families, combined to produce a present membership in the First Mennonite Church of Berne, Indiana, of 1250, exclusive of unbaptized children. The congregation has successfully weathered the storms of religious dissension and has conformed its life to that of a progressive American community.

The volume consists of four parts: a general history of the church to date, a history of the church auxiliaries, biographical sketches of sixteen leaders, and statistical compilations. Some idea of the active life of the Berne Mennonites may be gained from the rapid growth of auxiliary organizations. Sunday School was organized in 1874. Eight years later a Sunday School library was founded. These were followed by a Temperance Society, 1886; Women's Missionary Society, 1887; Choral Society, 18—; Christian Endeavor, 1894; Men's Chorus, 1898; Ladies' Chorus, 1912; Intermediate and Junior Mission Bands, 1912; Intermediate Christian Endeavor, 1913; Summer Bible School, 1921; Mid-Week Committee, 1927; Young Men's Chorus, 1934; and Young Ladies' Chorus, 1935.

The book is well bound, profusely illustrated, and well indexed. The author approached her task with a sympathetic understanding of her people. One feels that she has followed good historical methods even though no sources are given in the text. This omission is certainly due to the nature of the sources which the author of a regional or congregational history must use. These sources are listed on page XI.

An interesting aspect of Mennonite life is the barriers against the "world" which the church has created, one application of which is in the style and material of the clothing. Johannes Kessler, an early Swiss writer of the Reformation period, mentions the coarse drab apparel which the Swiss Anabaptists wore in the early sixteenth century. Our present author describes the severe plainness of the Bernese immigrants and the recent conformation to the conventional dress of America. She is of course exegetically in error in holding that the veil of which Paul writes in I Corinthians XI was the hair (p. 18).

The Berne, Indiana, Mennonites are affiliated with the Middle District of the General Conference of The Mennonite Church of North America.

Goshen College. John C. Wenger.

Life and Letters of Jacob Burkhard, Missionary to India. Written and compiled by his wife, Mary Yoder Burkhard. Goshen, Indiana. 1936. $1.00.

Too few biographies of Mennonite leaders have been written. This 214-page, illustrated biography of Jacob Burkhard (1873-1906) is a good example of how to meet this need.

Jacob Burkhard was born October 11, 1873 in Illinois, but grew to manhood in Nebraska. In 1894 he was converted during evangelistic services

held by the late J. M. R. Weaver. In the fall of 1899 Jacob entered Elkhart Institute (now Goshen College) where he studied Bible and Music. The influence of John S. Coffman (1848-99), the first outstanding American Mennonite evangelist, was still strong in Elkhart Institute and missionary interest was deep. In 1900 Jacob was married to Mary Yoder, and together they sailed for India September 26 of that year. He was ordained to the ministry on April 5, 1901. On the mission field Jacob was a devoted, consecrated, praying worker. In the late summer of 1906 he developed a carbuncle on his back to which he succumbed on September 29, 1906.

The late J. A. Ressler, pioneer Mennonite missionary to India, writes in the Introduction to the volume, "His short career as a missionary in India certainly deserves to be recorded in permanent form, and the letters he wrote, many of which are presented in this work, are eminently worth reading. The reading of this life story cannot but impress one with the need of more souls consecrated to unselfish service, more men and women yielded to God in devotion and prayer."

Goshen College. John C. Wenger.

Life of Peter S. Hartman. Including his lecture reminiscences of the Civil War, and articles by the Hartman family. Written and Arranged by H. A. Brunk. Published by the Hartman Family, Harrisonburg, Virginia, 1937. $ .75.

H. A. Brunk, an instructor in Eastern Mennonite School, Harrisonburg, Virginia, presents in this 73-page book a biographical sketch of a prominent Mennonite layman of Virginia. Peter S. Hartman (1846-1934) was born near Harrisonburg, Virginia, and in this community spent most of his life. He was converted and united with the Mennonite Church in 1864. His seventy years of church membership were years of usefulness. He was also an asset to his community. For example, he worked hard in promoting temperance legislation. When statewide prohibition was proposed Hartman traveled six months in behalf of this movement. He was also a strong supporter of Sunday Schools after a brief period of opposition. And when the Virginia Mennonites established a church school Hartman took a keen interest in the project. He also took a deep interest in mission work. His lecture "Civil War Reminiscences," was published in an early issue (July, 1929, pp. 203-219), of The Mennonite Quarterly Review. The attractiveness of the book is enhanced by several portraits.

Goshen College. John C. Wenger.